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Mahabharata-3

The Advent of the Kuru Princes

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MAHABHARATA

The Mahabharata is the longest epic known to man. It is also what may be called the total epic because, besides being a literary classic, it is a supreme work of philosophy and an exhaustive manual of morals and manners.

The origin of the Mahabharata is shrouded in mystery. Countless scholars have pried into the work to discover the personality of its author, Veda Vyasa, to pin down its date of composition, and to analyse its historical veracity. But doubts still persist on all these counts.

Was it possible for one person to compose over a hundred thousand verses? Handed down by oral tradition, was the Mahabharata written down in 800 B.C. or 600 B.C. or 300 B.C.? Can the levels of Painted Grey Ware and Northern Black Polished Ware, or the names of present-day cities and plains, or the radio-carbon tests of excavated materials, vouch for its historicity? There is no conclusive answer.

The core of the tale – the feud between the princely cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, leading to the eighteen-day-long bloody war – must have had its roots in some real event. The text with its available recensions points to three oral versions : the first as recited by Veda Vyasa himself, the next as recited by his disciple Vaishampayana to Janamejaya, and the third as narrated again by one Sauti, who had heard Vaishampayana's recital. Additions and interpolations must have crept in at various times, till the advent of the printing-press and standard editions.

For this series, we have referred to the following works:

1. Mahabharata – Sanskrit text with a Hindi translation by Pandit Ramnarayandutt Shastri Pandey ("RAM"), published by Geeta Press, Gorakhpur.

2. Shri Mahabharatam – Translated into Malayalam verse, by Kunjikuttan Tampuran, and published by S.P.C.S., Kottayam.

3. The Mahabharata – Translated into English prose by Pratap Chandra Roy, and published by Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi.

4. The critical edition brought out by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune.

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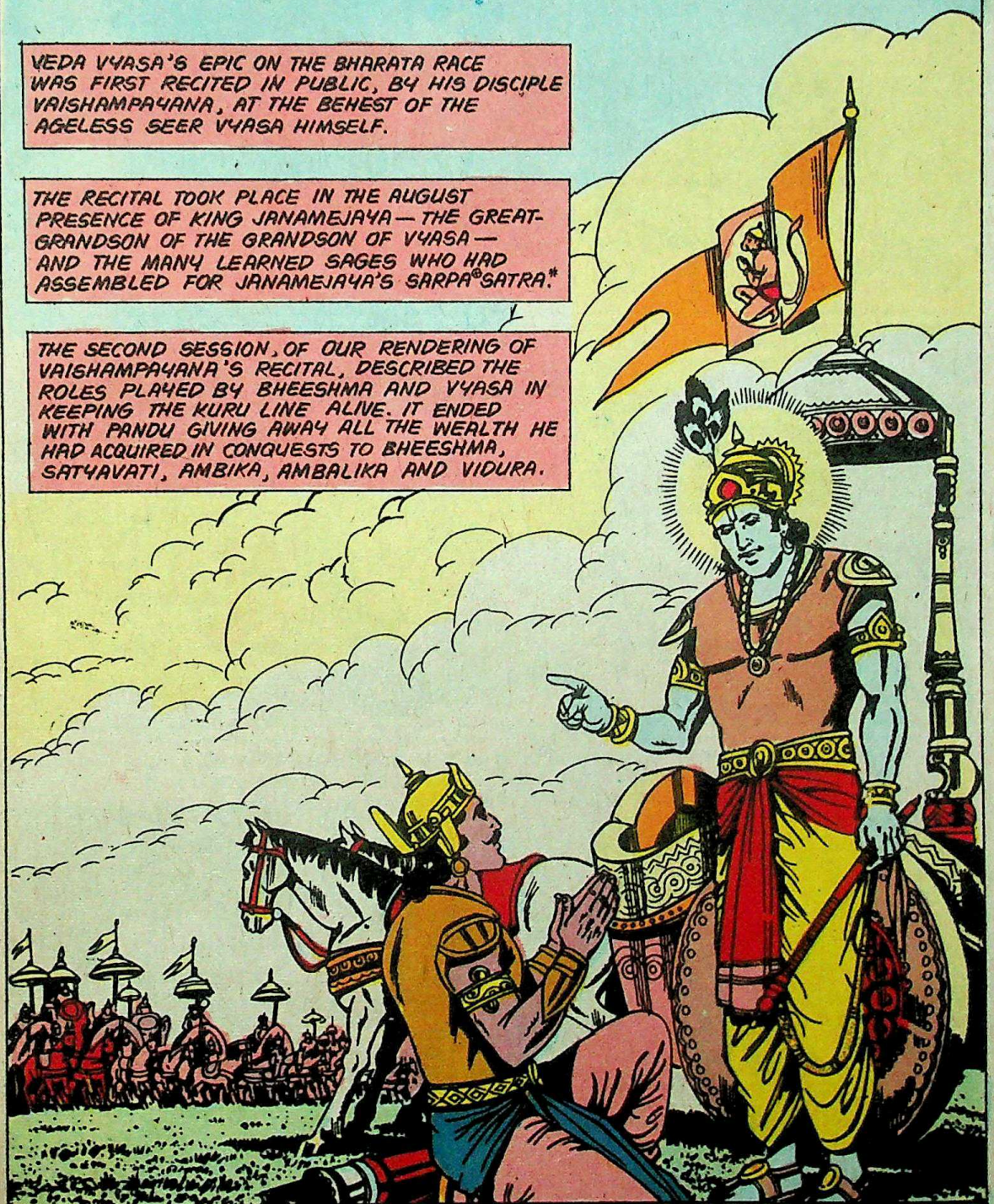
The Advent of the Kuru Princes

VEDA VYASA'S EPIC ON THE BHARATA RACE WAS FIRST RECITED IN PUBLIC, BY HIS DISCIPLE VAISHAMPAYANA, AT THE BEHEST OF THE AGELESS SEER VYASA HIMSELF.

THE RECITAL TOOK PLACE IN THE AUGUST PRESENCE OF KING JANAMEJAYA — THE GREAT-GRANDSON OF THE GRANDSON OF VYASA — AND THE MANY LEARNED SAGES WHO HAD ASSEMBLED FOR JANAMEJAYA'S SARPA®SATRA.*

THE SECOND SESSION, OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL, DESCRIBED THE ROLES PLAYED BY BHEESHMA AND VYASA IN KEEPING THE KURU LINE ALIVE. IT ENDED WITH PANDU GIVING AWAY ALL THE WEALTH HE HAD ACQUIRED IN CONQUESTS TO BHEESHMA, SATYAVATI, AMBIKA, AMBALIKA AND VIDURA.



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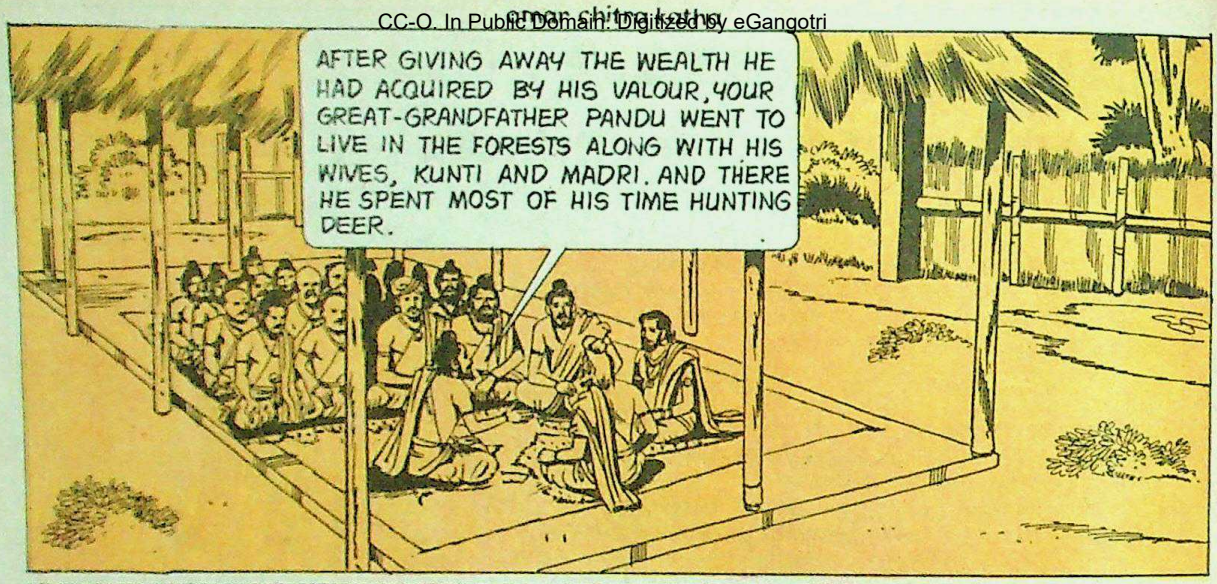

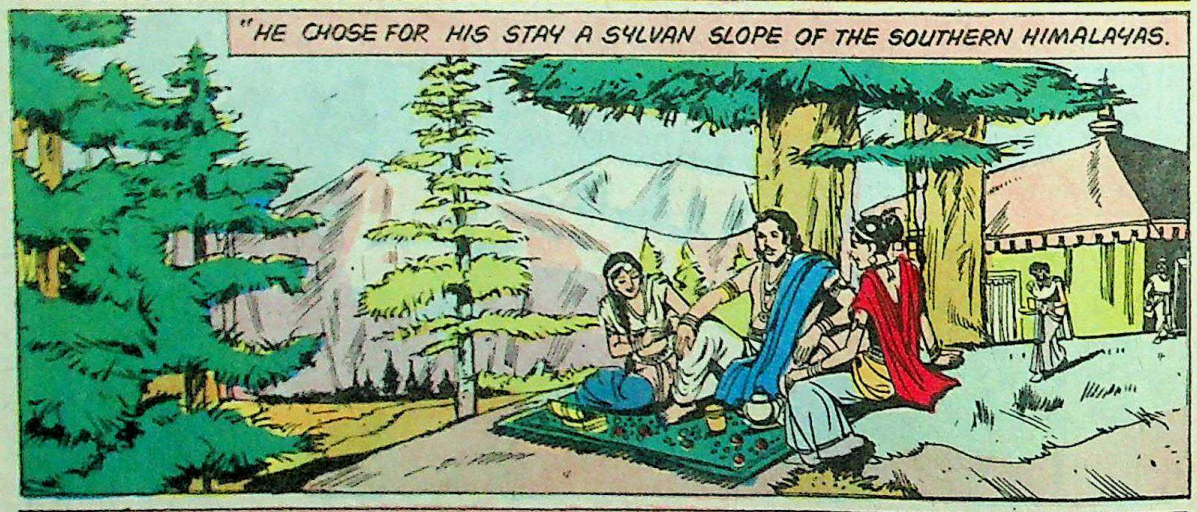

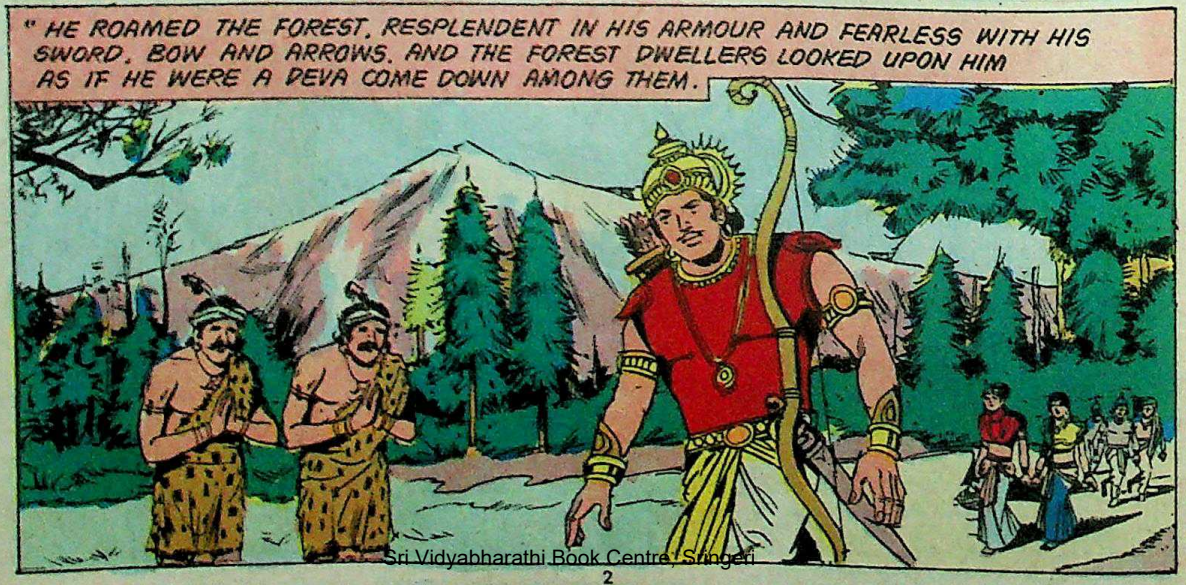

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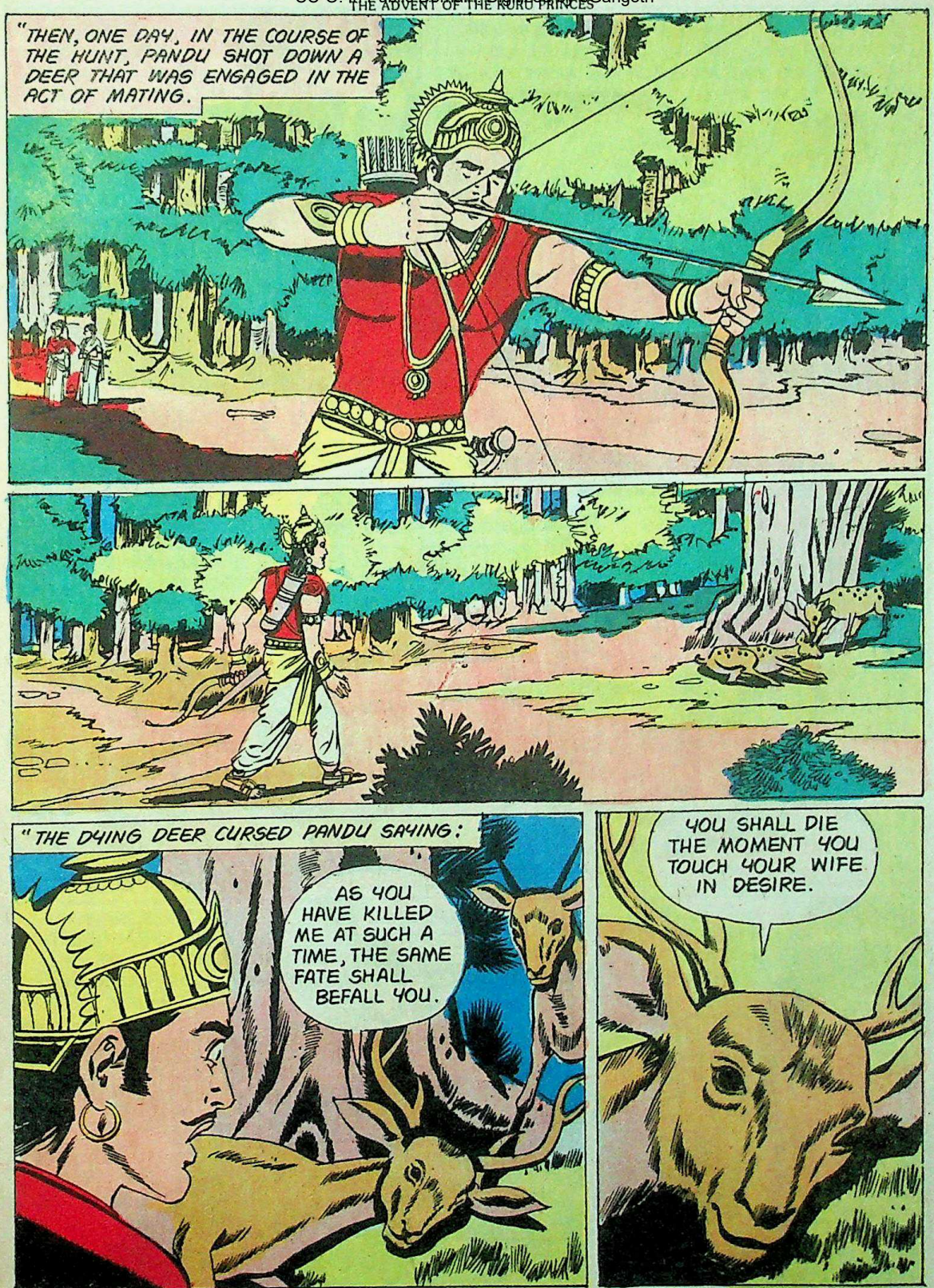

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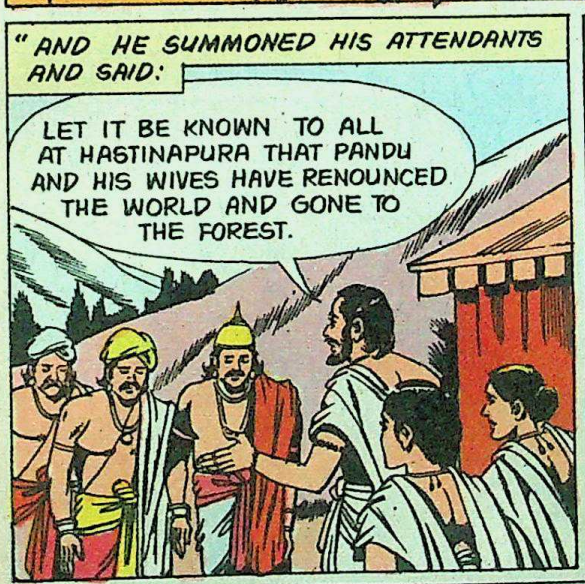

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"...AND BROKE IT INTO THUMB-SIZED PARTS. EACH PART WAS DEPOSITED BY A MIDWIFE INTO THE POT KEPT READY FOR IT. WHILE THIS WAS GOING ON, GANDHARI THOUGHT TO HERSELF:

BEYOND DOUBT I WILL HAVE A HUNDRED SONS BECAUSE THE MUNI HAS SAID SO.

BUT A DAUGHTER, A YOUNGER SISTER TO THESE HUNDRED SONS, WILL GIVE ME IMMENSE JOY.

IF I HAVE BEEN VIRTUOUS, LET A DAUGHTER BE BORN TO ME.

"AT THAT MOMENT MY PERCEPTIVE GURU ADDRESSED HER:

HERE ARE YOUR HUNDRED SONS.

HOWEVER, AN EXTRA PART REMAINS. IT SHALL BECOME THE DAUGHTER YOU DESIRE.

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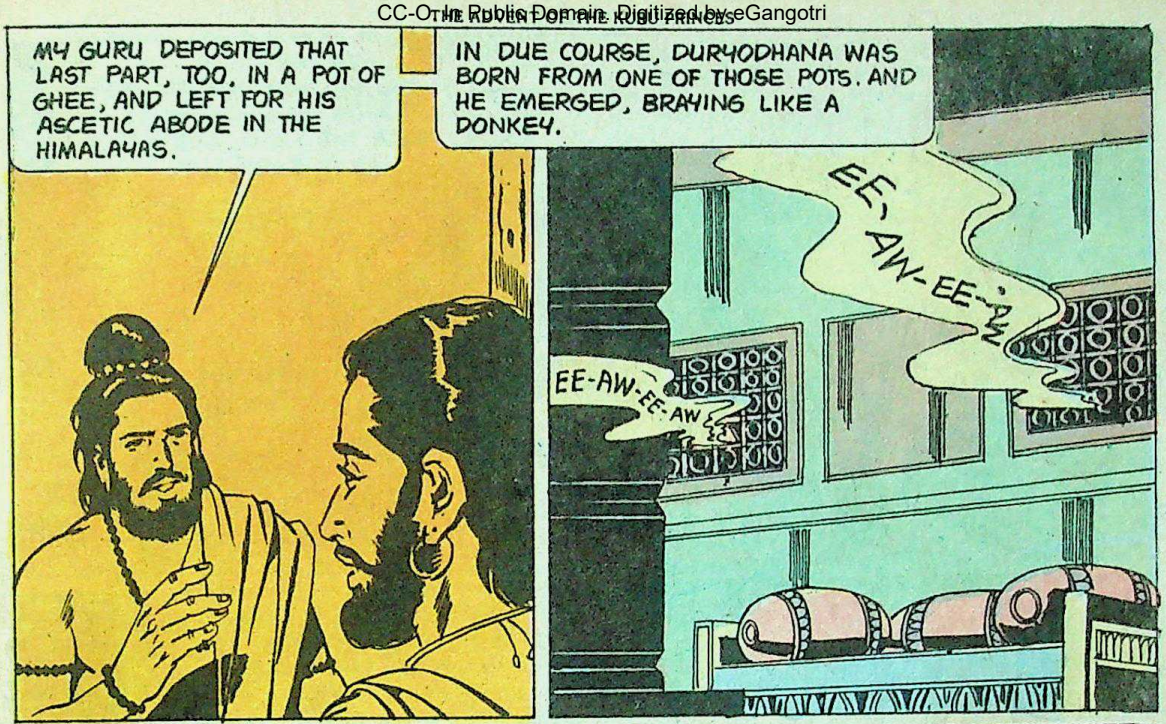

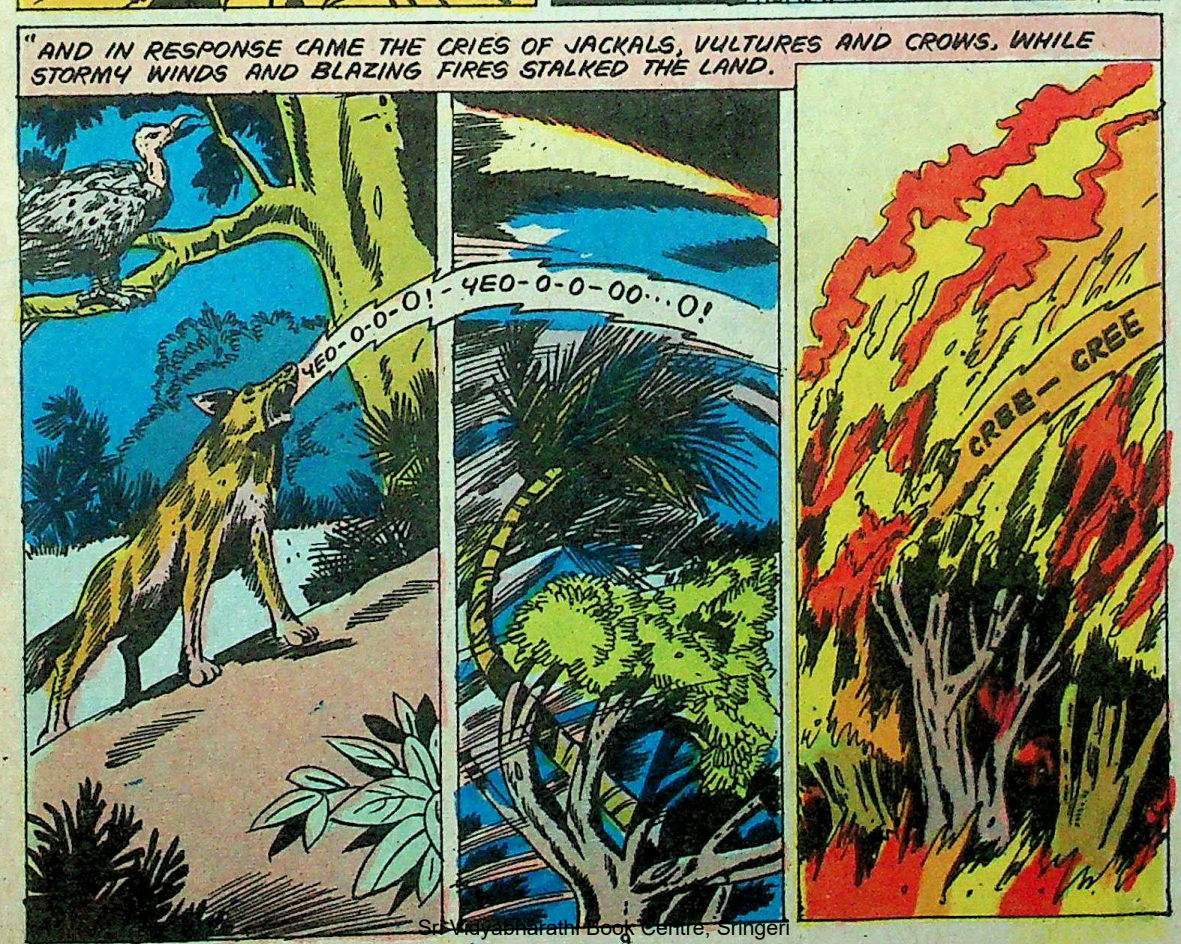

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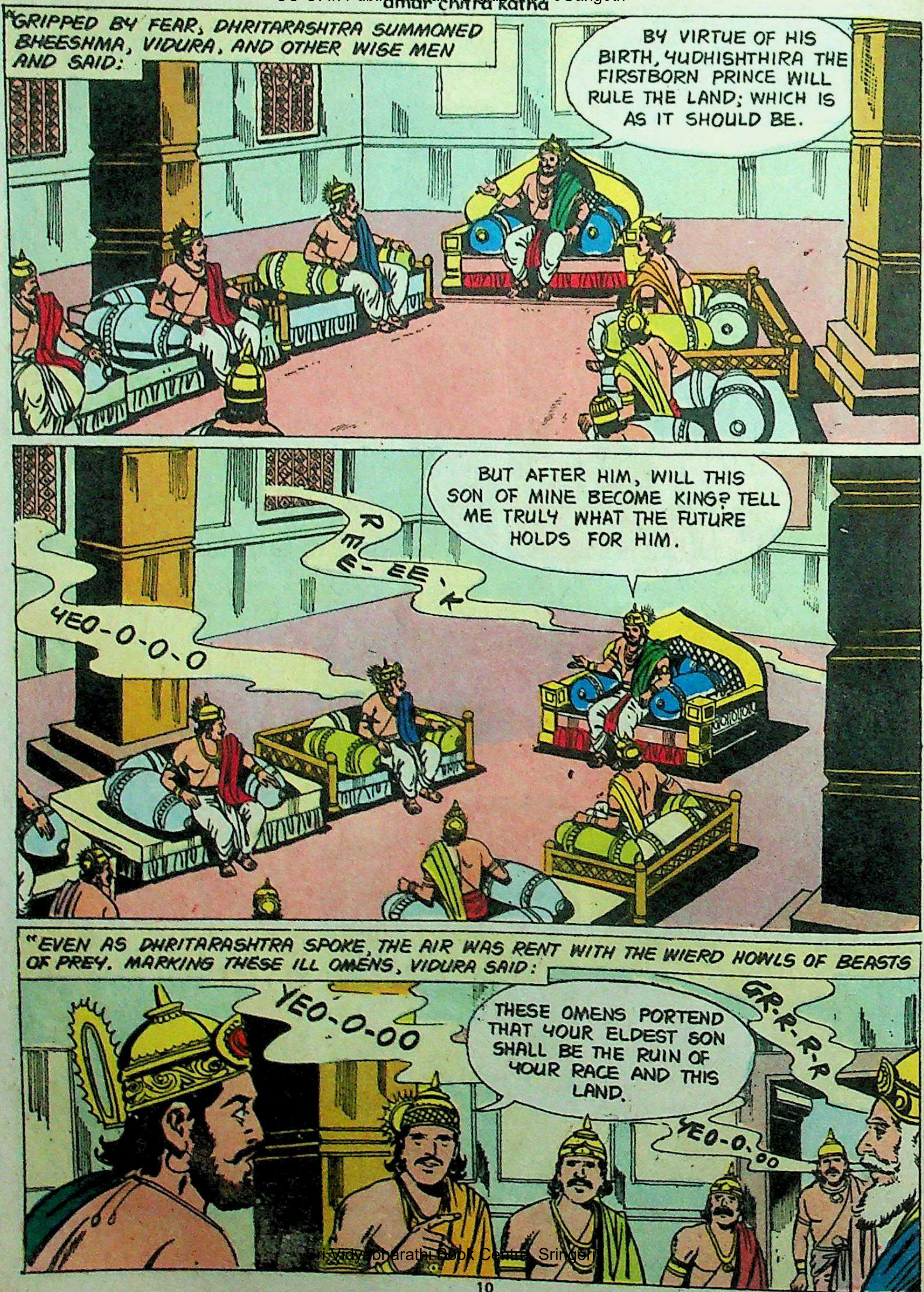

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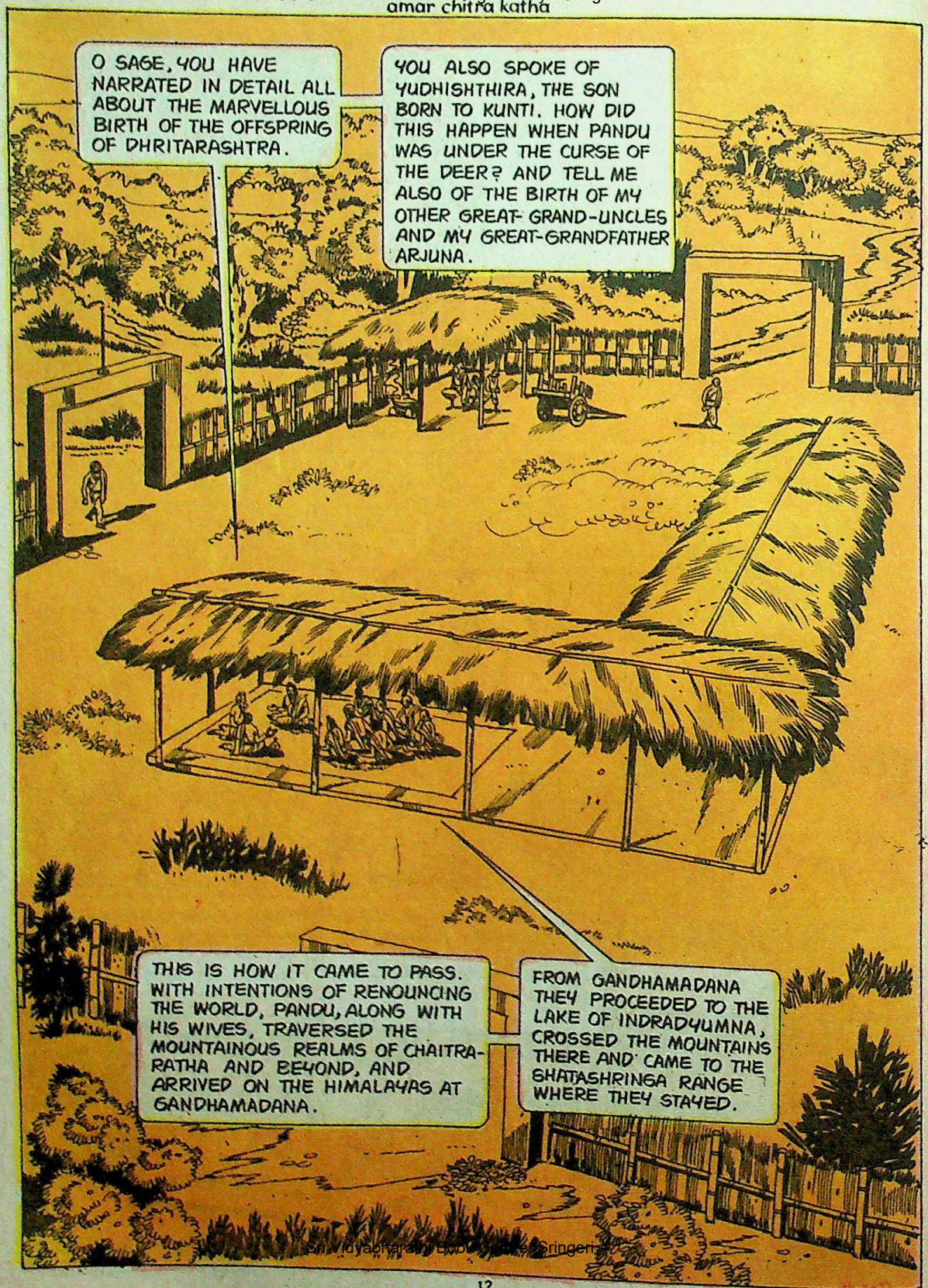

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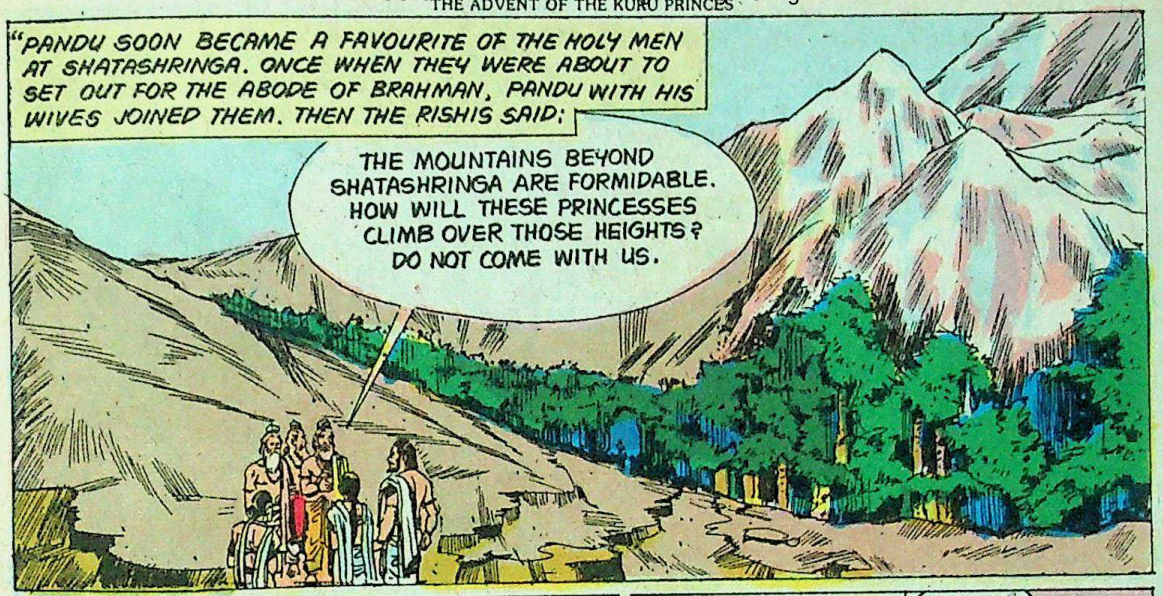

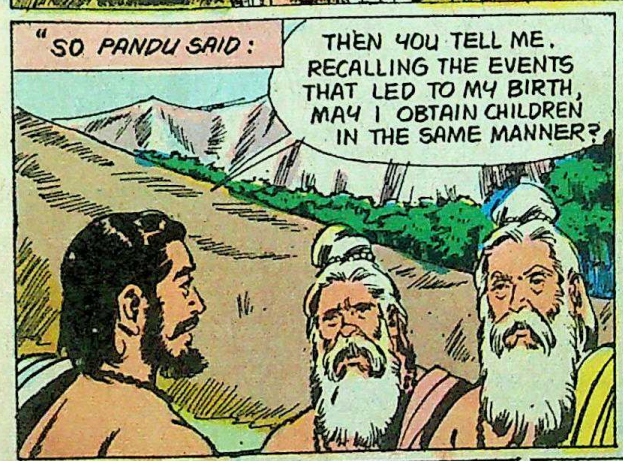

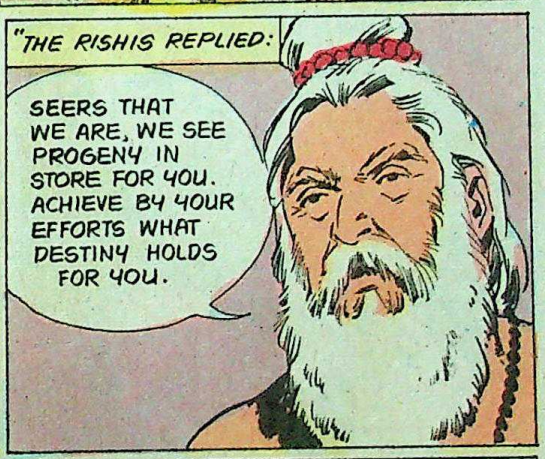

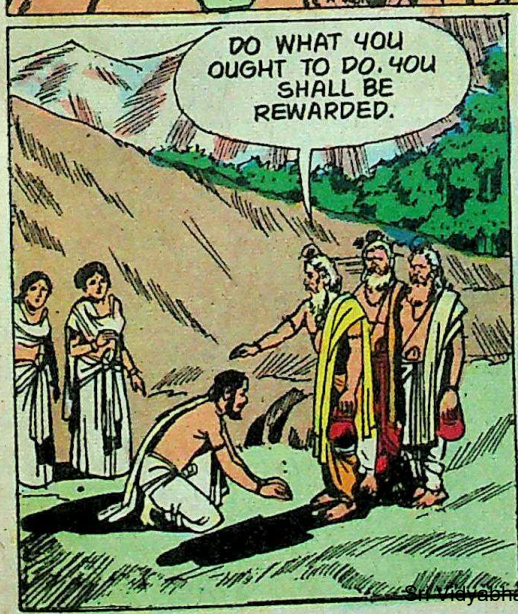

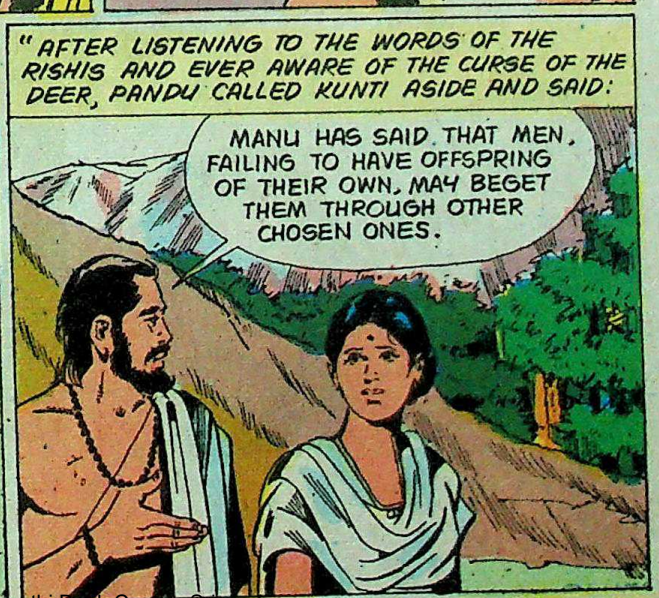

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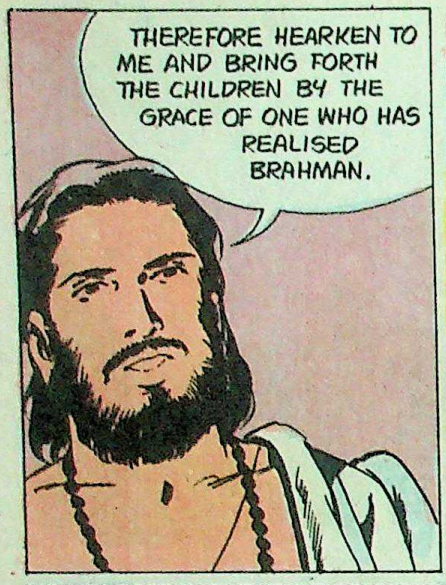

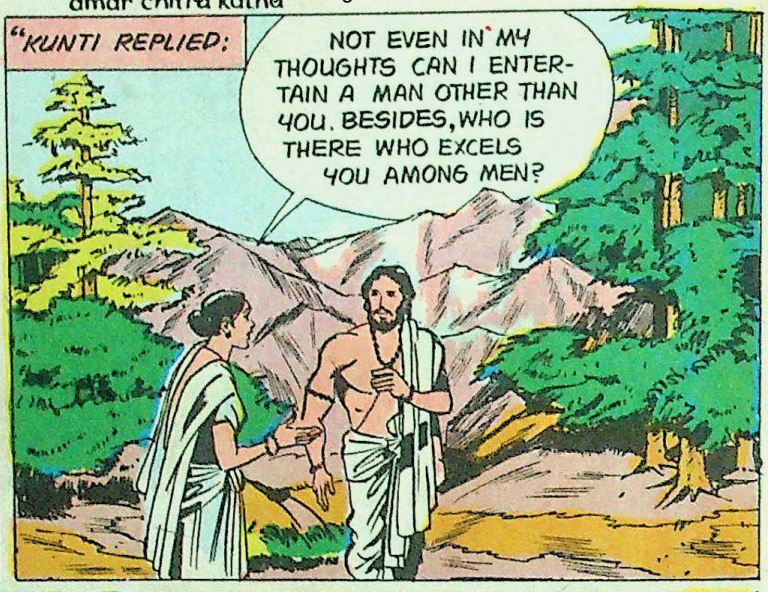

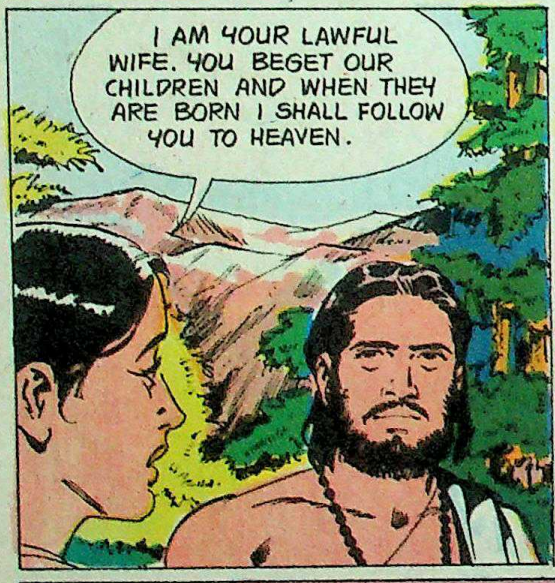

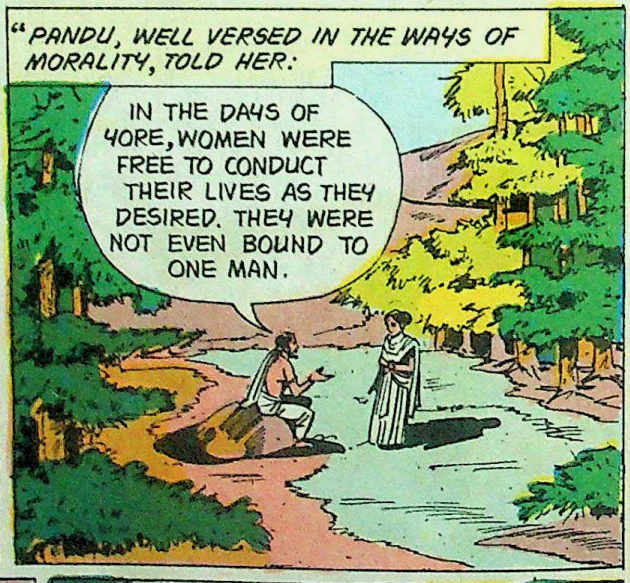

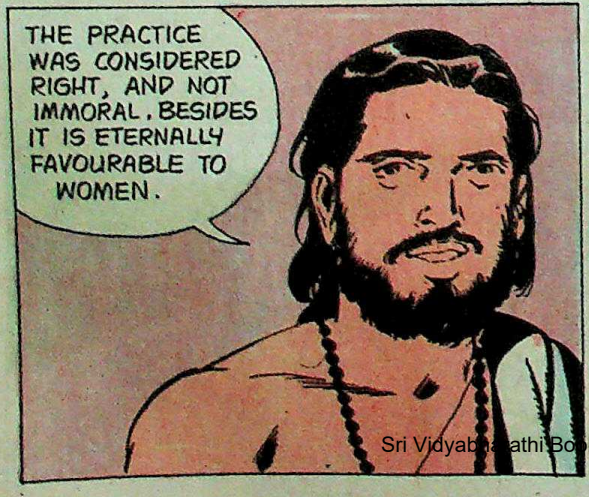

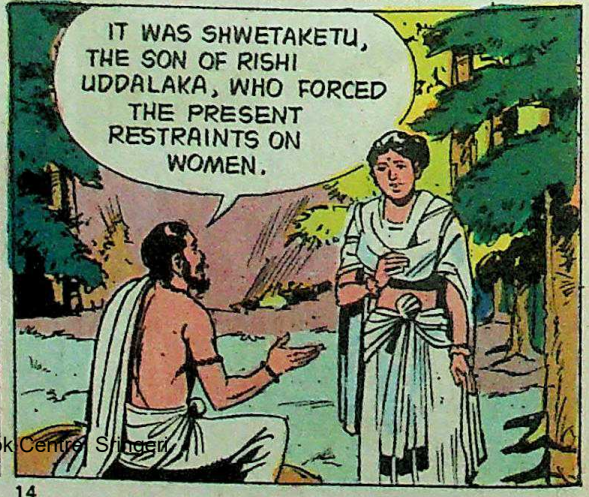

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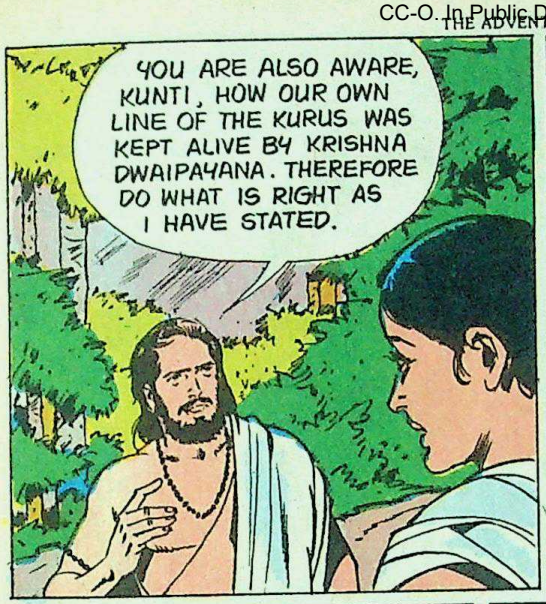

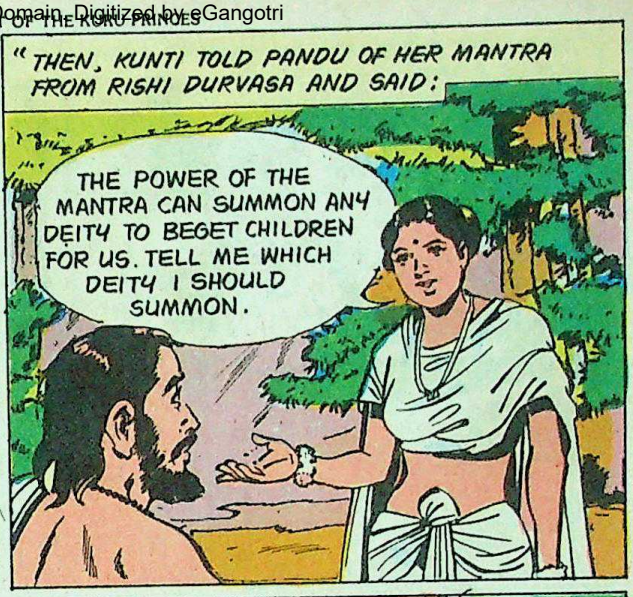

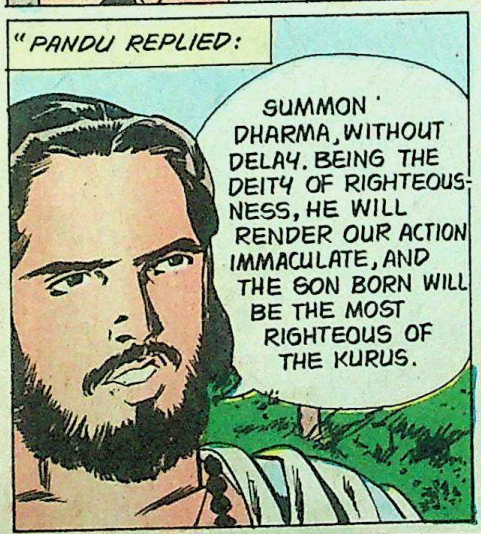

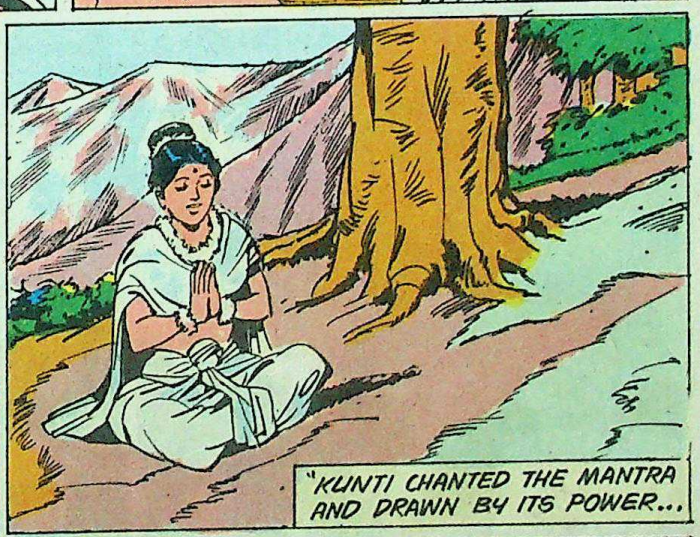

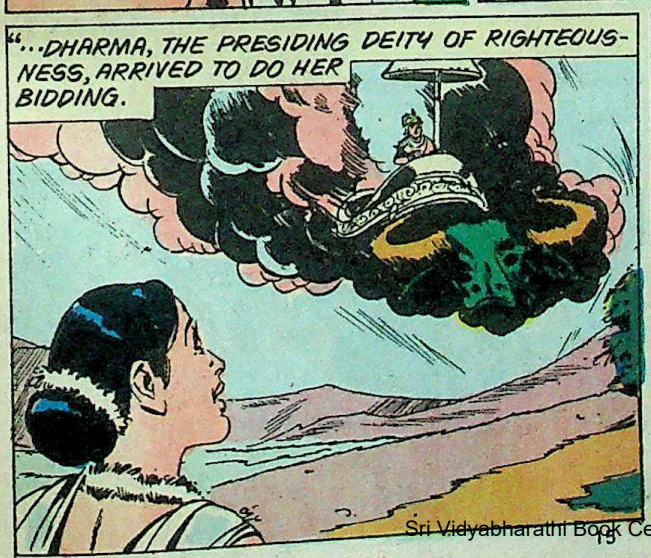

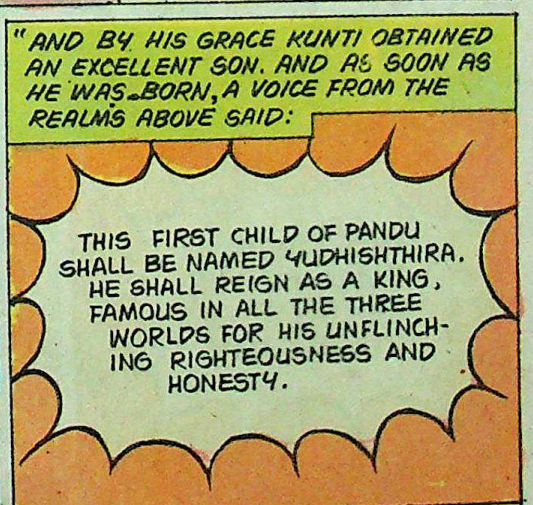

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"AFTER THE BIRTH OF YUDHISHTHIRA, PANDU SAID TO KUNTI:

IT IS SAID THAT PHYSICAL STRENGTH IS THE DISTINCTION OF A KSHATRIYA.

THEREFORE OBTAIN A SON OF IMMENSE MIGHT.

"ACCORDINGLY, KUNTI INVOKED VAYU AND THAT POWERFUL DEITY OF WIND ARRIVED AND SAID:

O KUNTI, TELL ME WHAT IS ON YOUR MIND.

"SMILING MODESTLY, KUNTI REPLIED:

GIVE ME A STRONG SON WHOSE MIGHT WILL HUMBLE THE PRIDE OF THE MIGHTIEST.

"AND THEN WAS BORN BHEEMA OF MATCHLESS STRENGTH AND VALOUR, AND A VOICE FROM THE REALMS ABOVE SAID:

THIS CHILD SHALL BE THE MIGHTIEST OF THE MIGHTY.

"SOON AFTER HIS BIRTH, O MONARCH, BHEEMA WAS SLEEPING IN KUNTI'S LAP...

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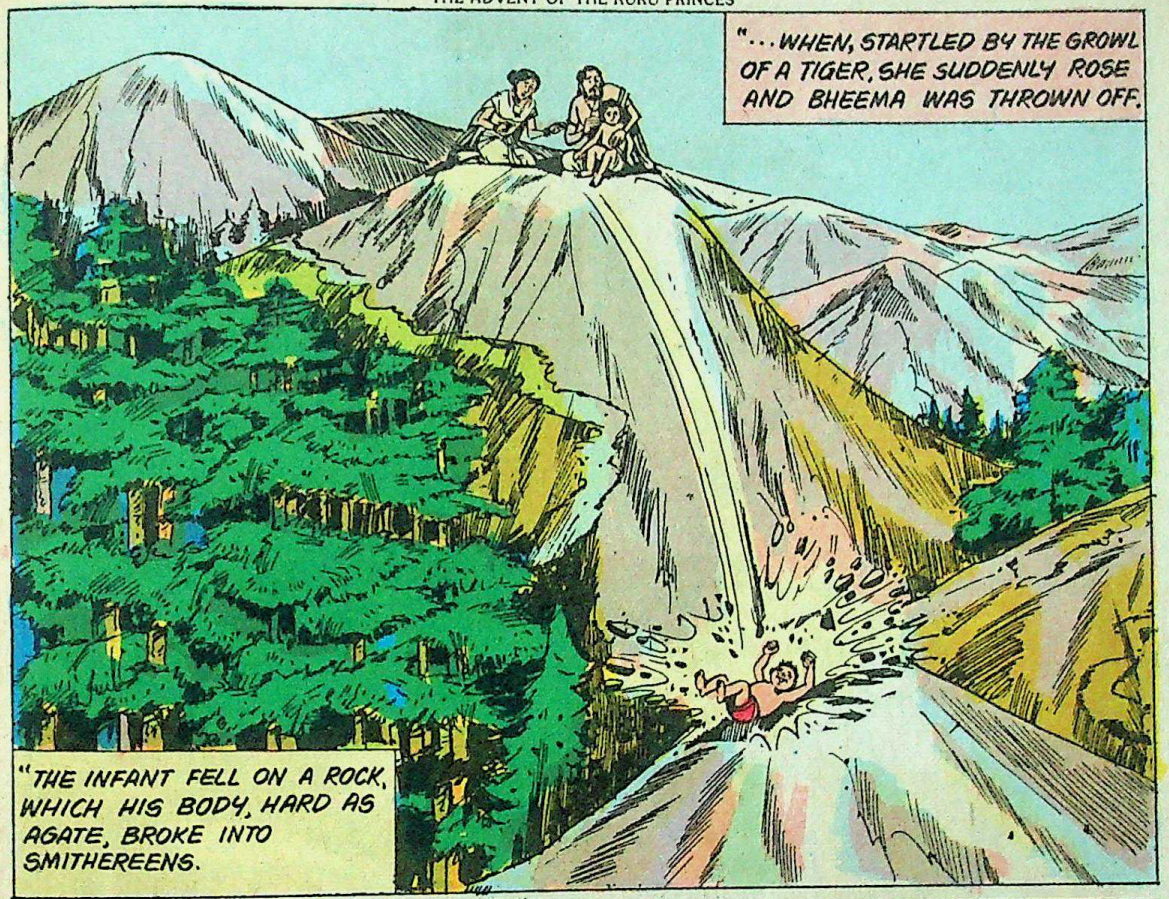

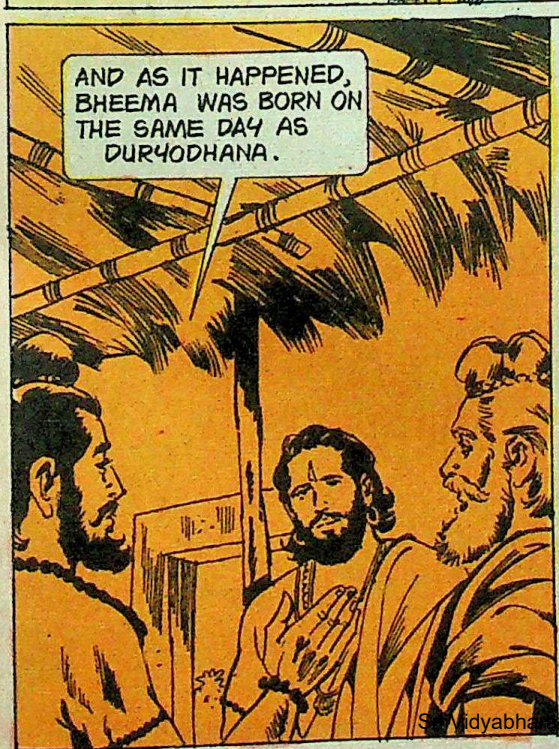

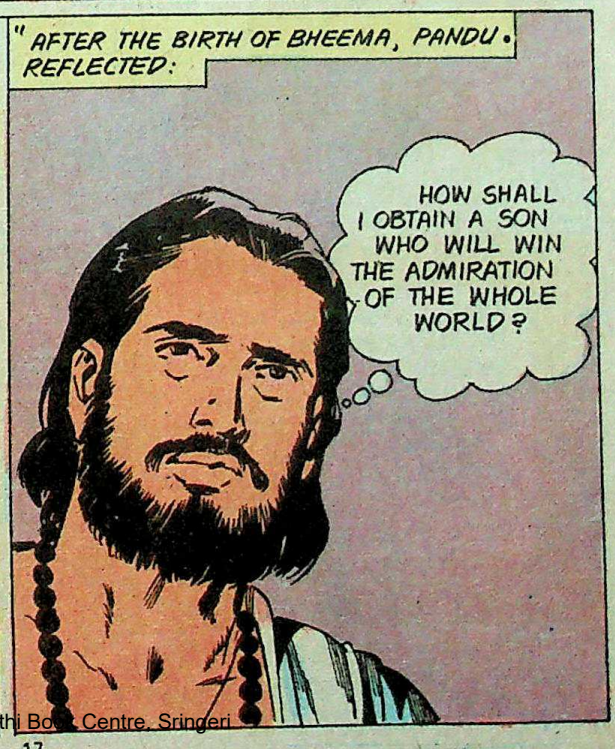

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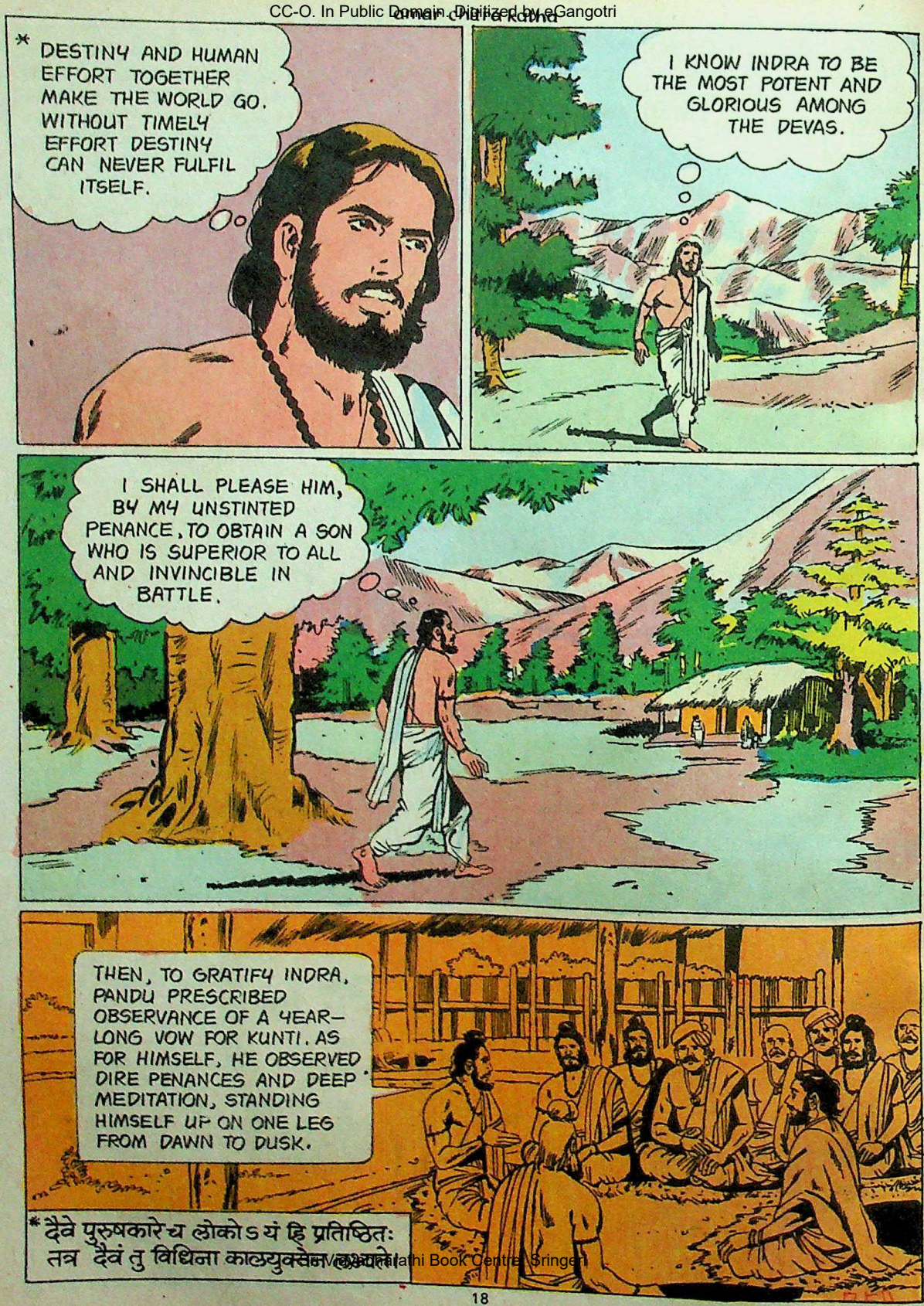

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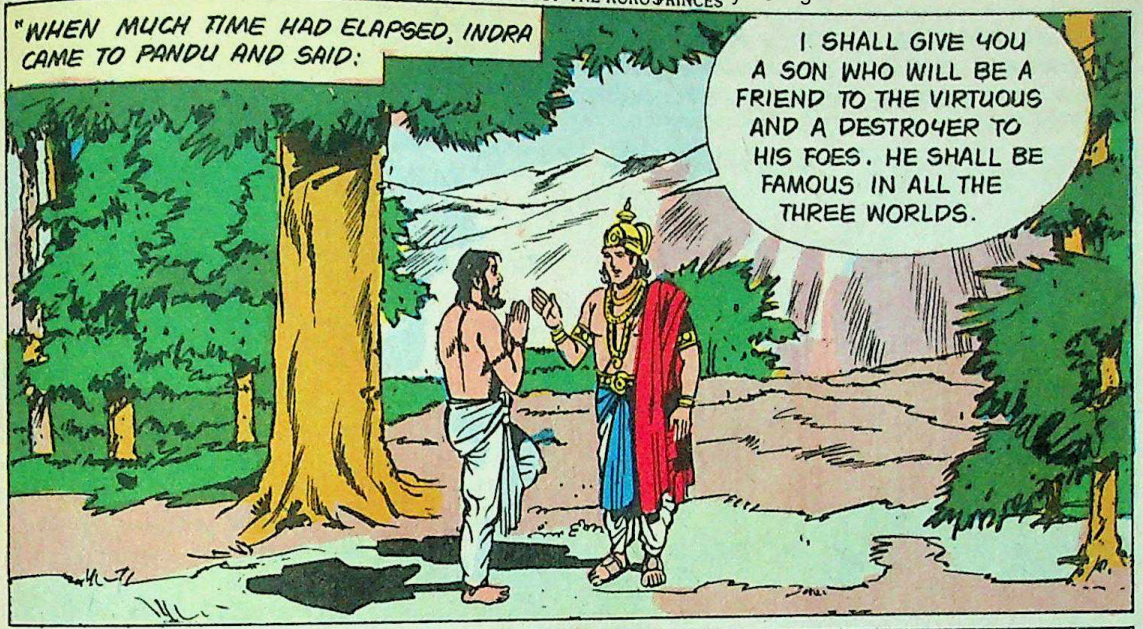

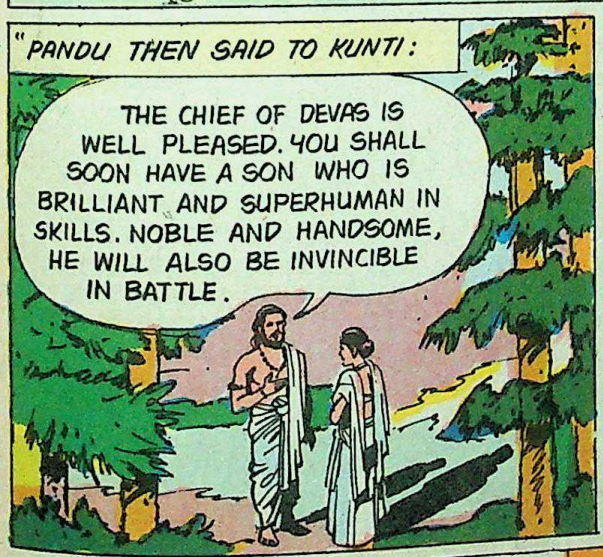

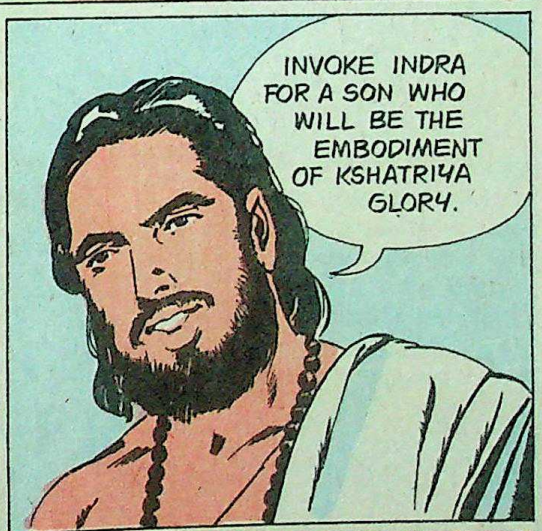

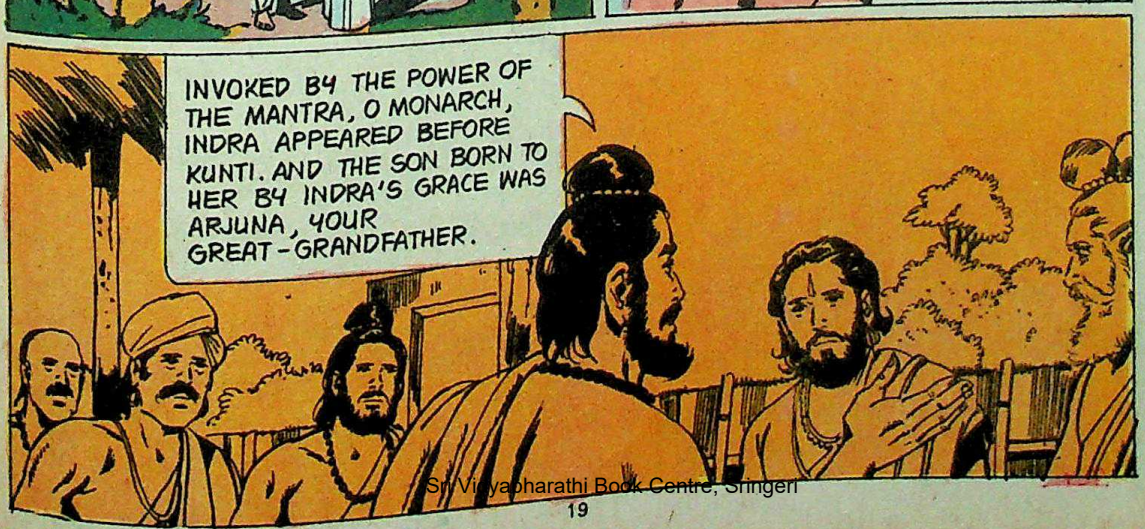

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"AND AS SOON AS THE CHILD WAS BORN, THE EARTH AND THE SKY RESOUNDED WITH A VOICE FROM THE REALMS ABOVE WHICH ADDRESSED KUNTI THUS IN LOUD, CLEAR TONES:

THIS INVINCIBLE CHILD WILL MAKE YOU FAMOUS.

IN VALOUR HE WILL EQUAL VISHNU, SHIVA AND PARASHURAMA.

HIS MIGHT WILL ONE DAY SET THE KHANDAVA FOREST ABLAZE AND GRATIFY AGNI WITH THE FAT OF THE CREATURES IN IT.

HE WILL WIN THE ADMIRATION OF SHIVA IN COMBAT AND WILL THEREBY OBTAIN THE PASHUPATA WEAPON FROM HIM.

HE WILL, AT THE BEHEST OF INDRA, ANNIHILATE THE NIVATAKAVACHAS, FOES OF THE DEVAS.

HE WILL ACQUIRE ALL THE MYSTERIOUS MISSILES AND RESTORE THE GLORY OF THE KURUS.

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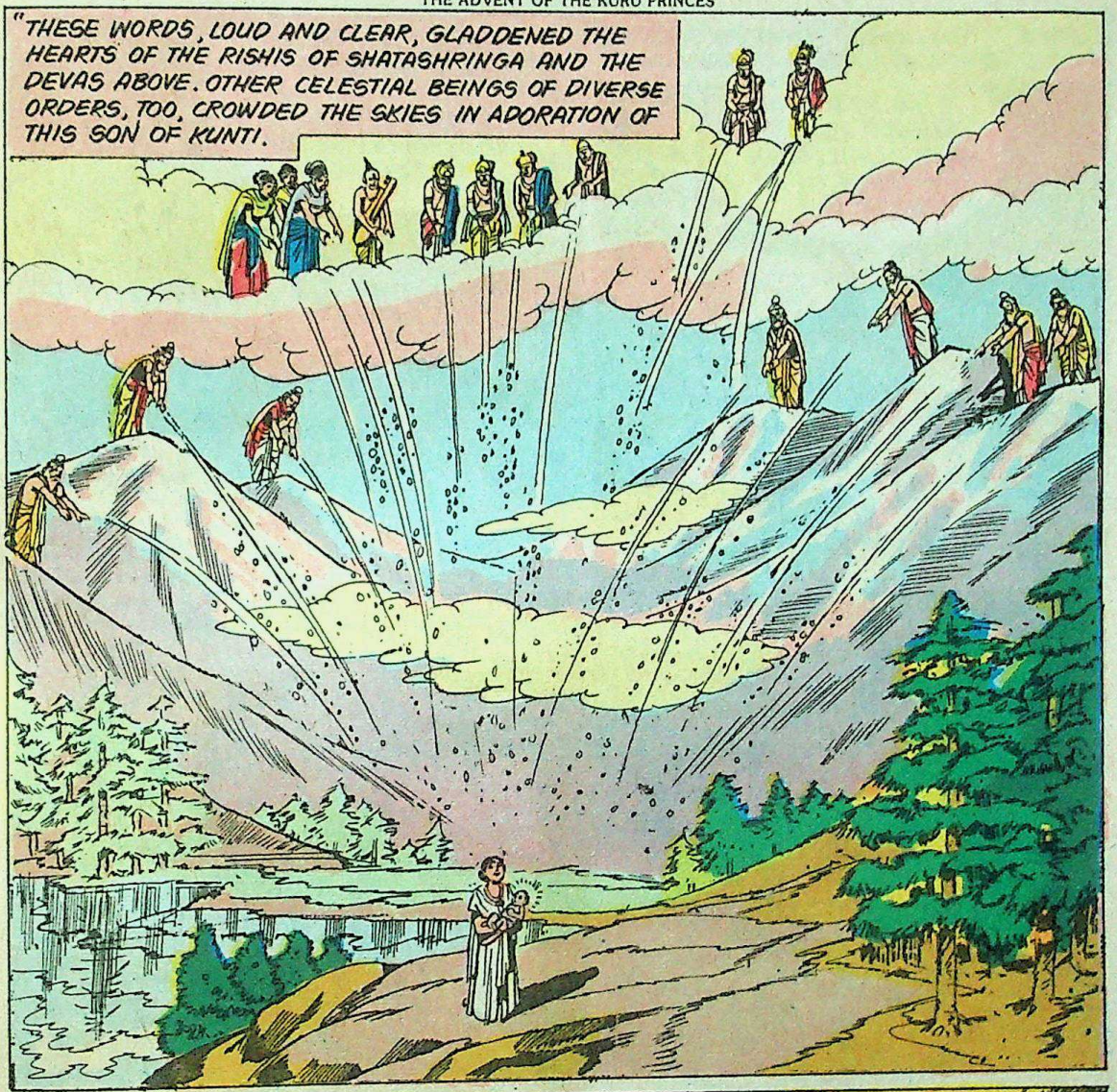

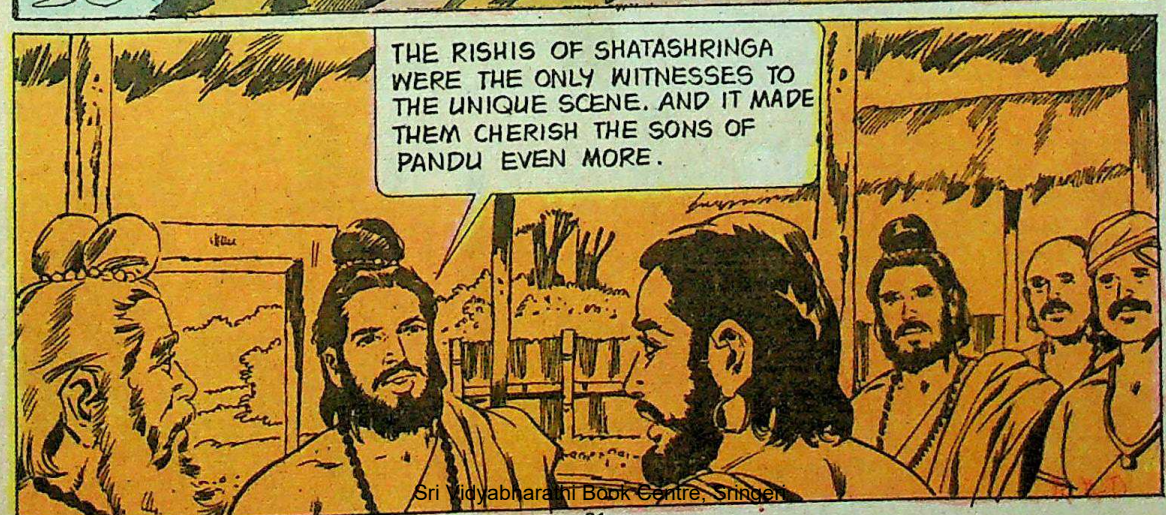

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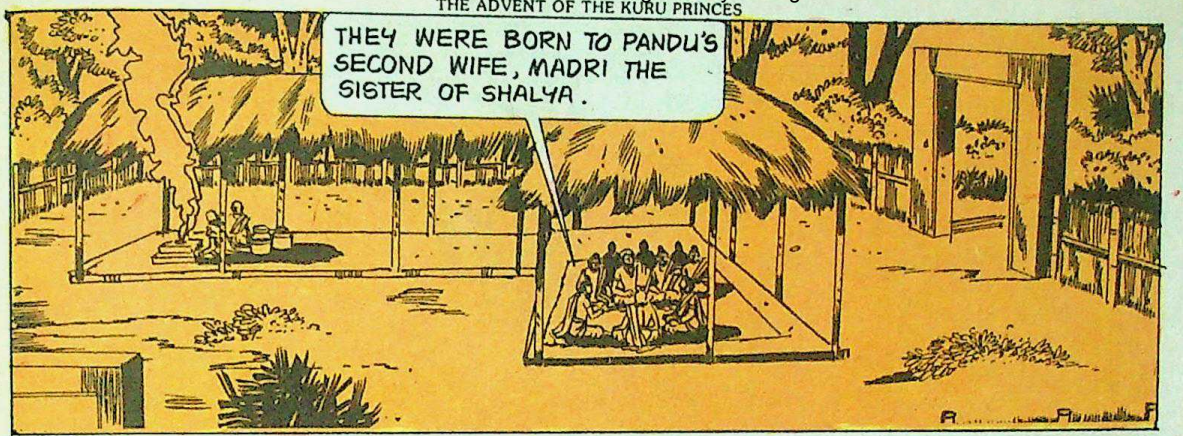

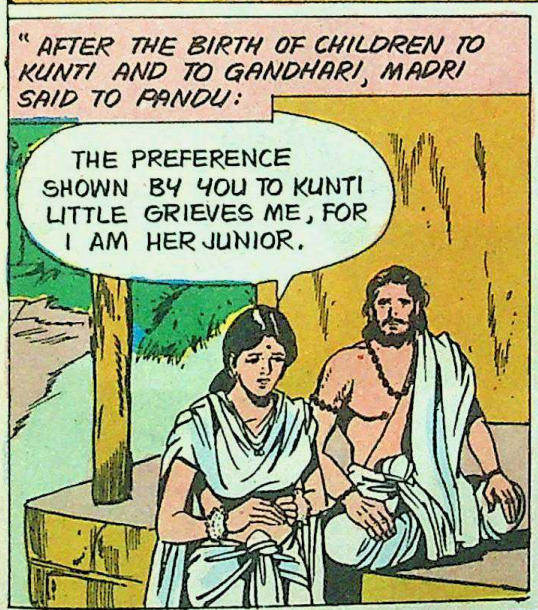

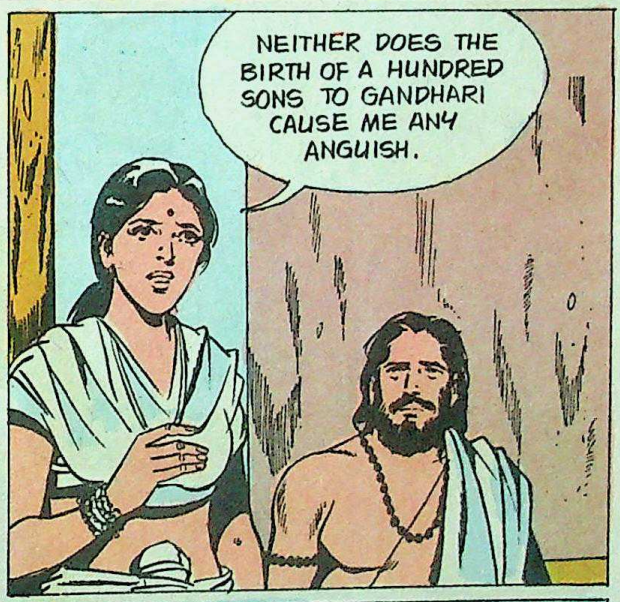

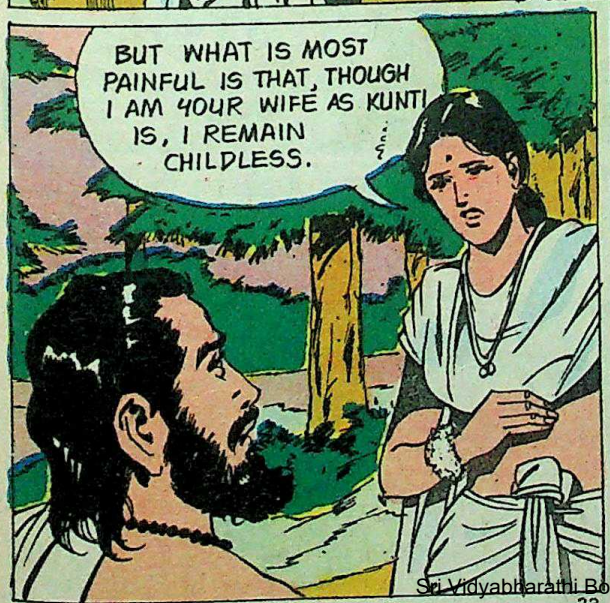

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"AND AS SOON AS THEY WERE BORN, A VOICE FROM THE REALMS ABOVE SAID:

IN VIGOUR AND BEAUTY THE TWINS SHALL EXCEL ALL.

"AFTER THEIR BIRTH, PANDU ONCE AGAIN SPOKE TO KUNTI ON BEHALF OF MADRI. BUT KUNTI REPLIED:

USING THE MANTRA ONCE, SHE HAS BROUGHT FORTH TWO SONS.

ARTLESS THAT I WAS, I DID NOT THINK OF INVOKING THE TWINS FOR TWIN CHILDREN.

HER STEALTHY WAYS CAUSE ME ANXIETY. THEREFORE DO NOT COMMAND ME FURTHER..

PANDU LET THE MATTER REST. THEN THE RISHIS OF SHATASHRINGA CONDUCTED THE RITES OF INITIATION OF THE FIVE CHILDREN AND CEREMONIALLY NAMED THEM, YUDHISHTHIRA, BHEEMA, ARJUNA, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA.

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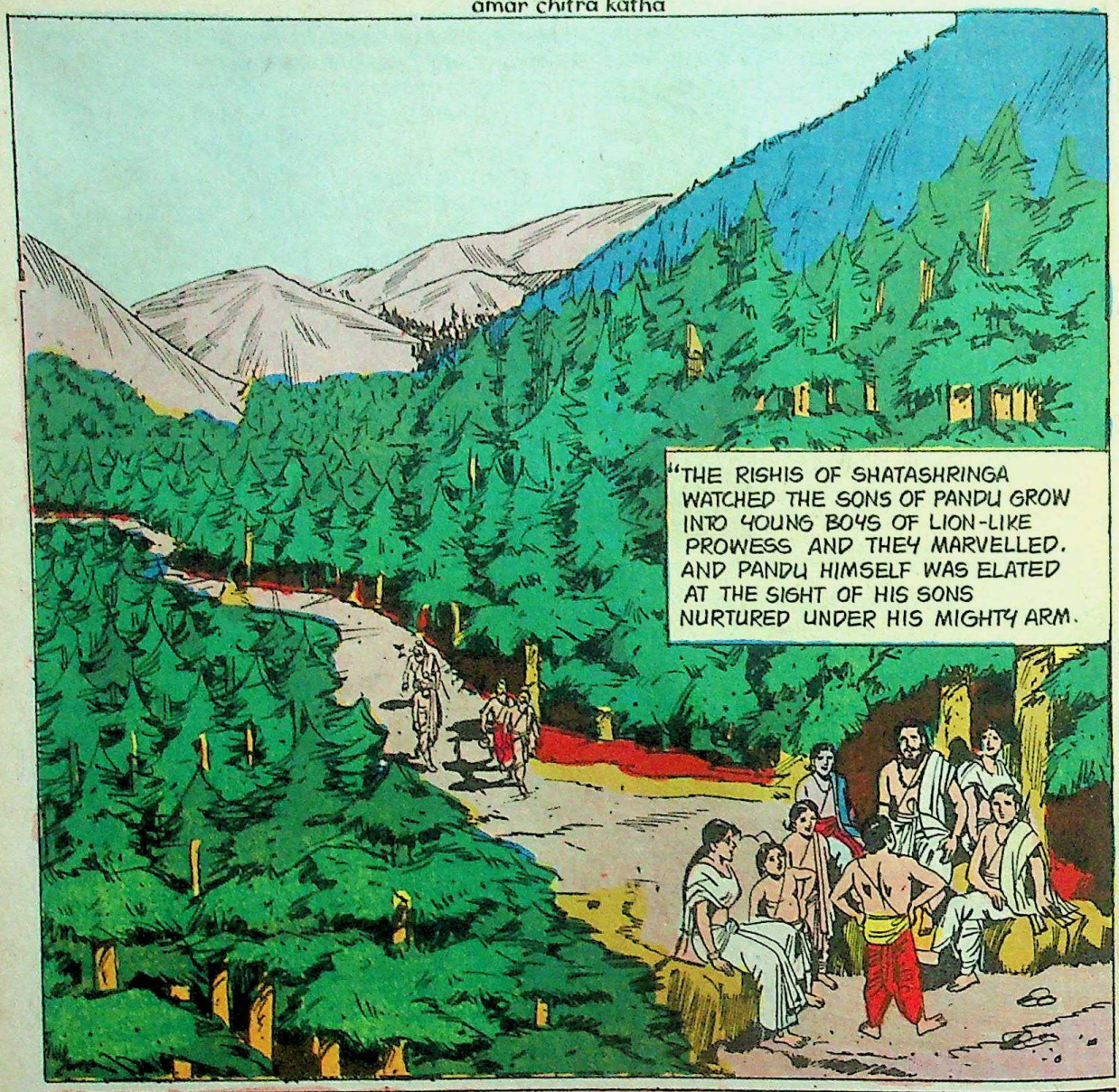

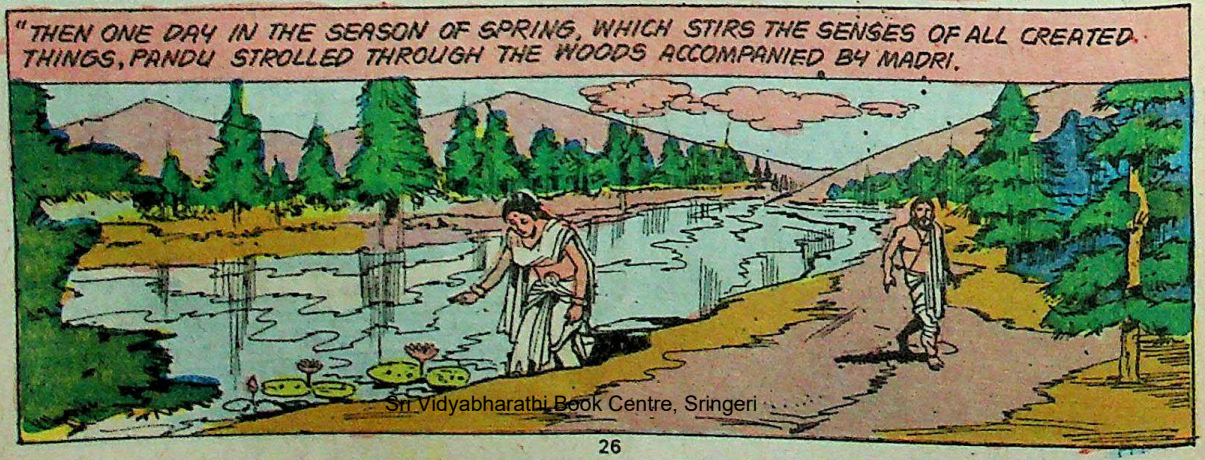

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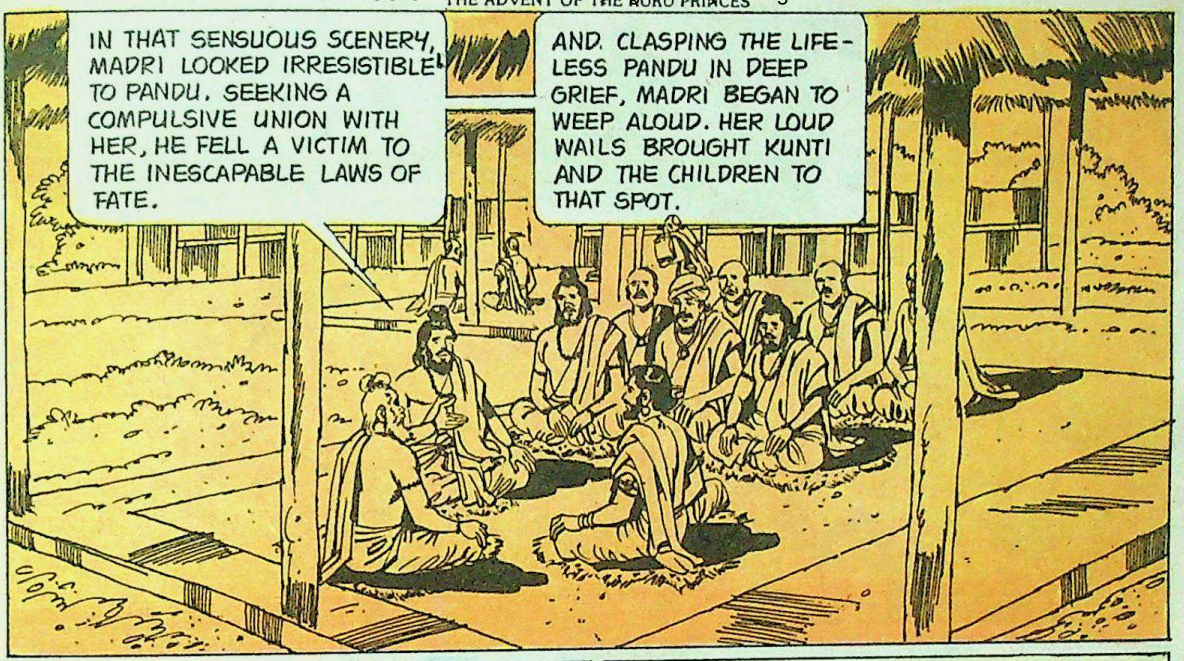

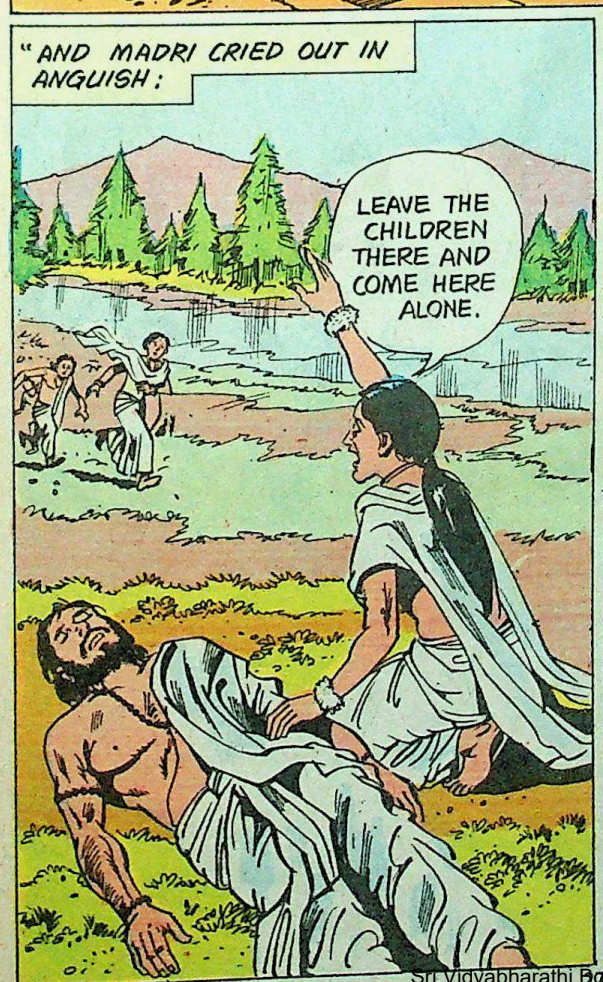

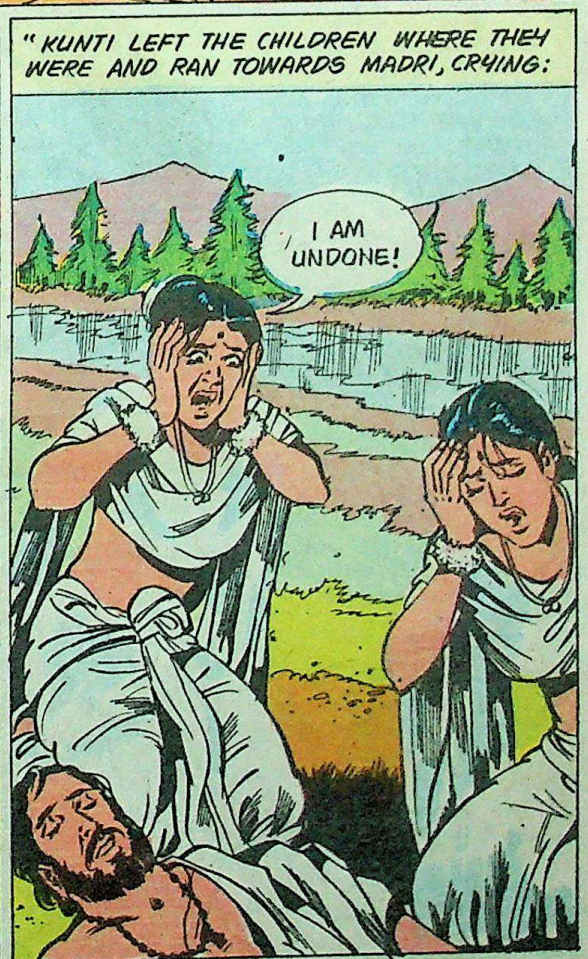

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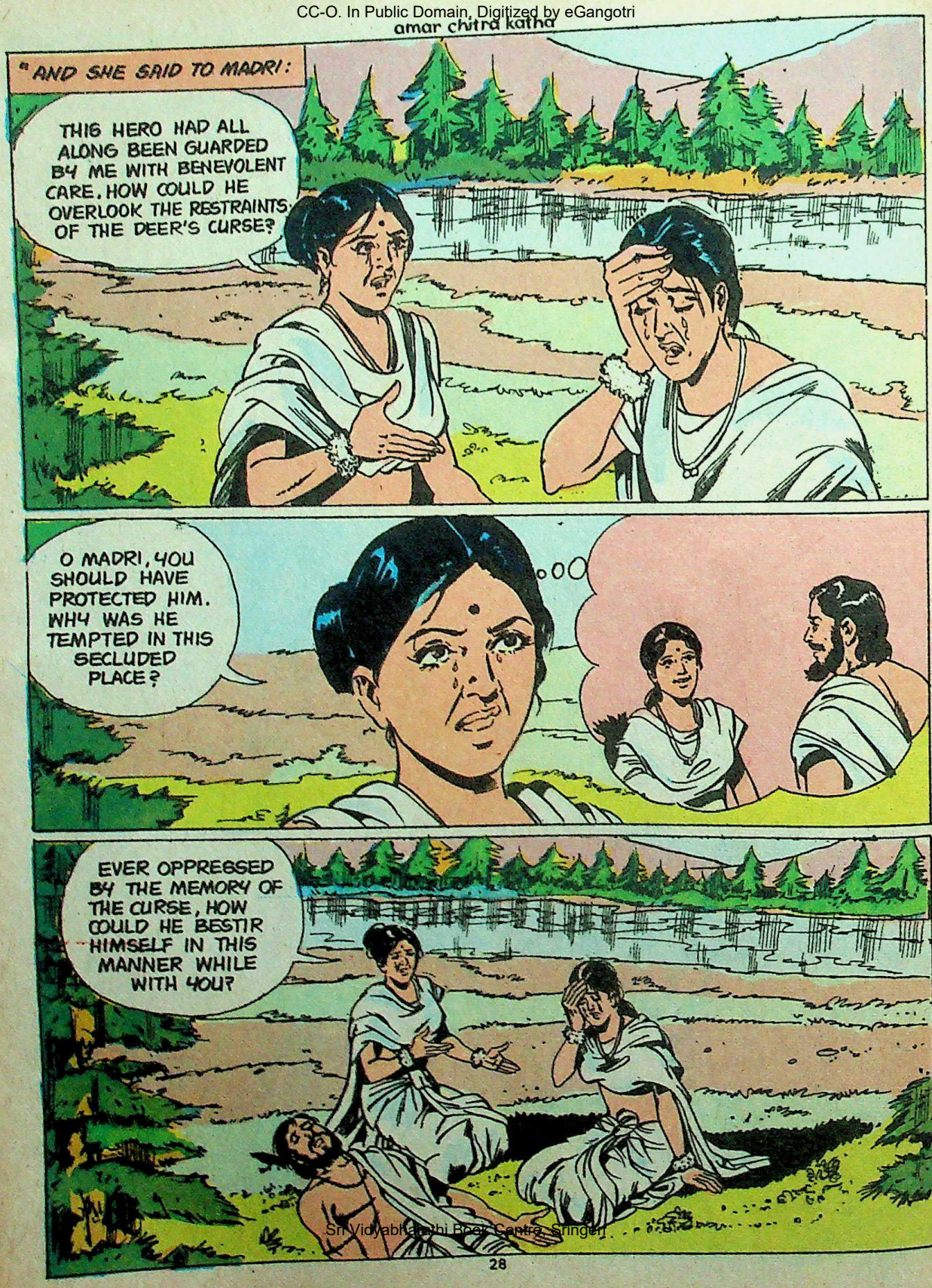

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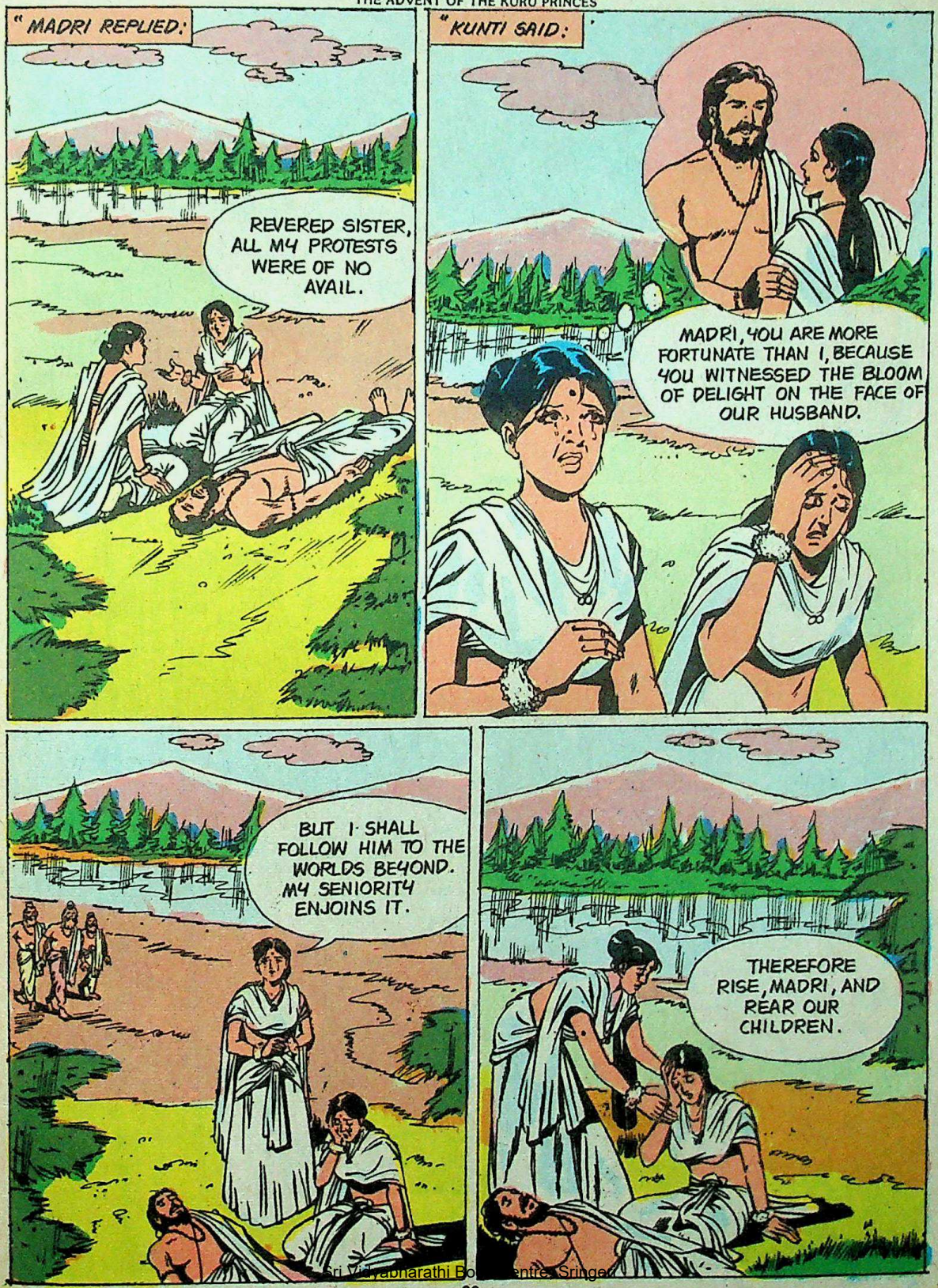

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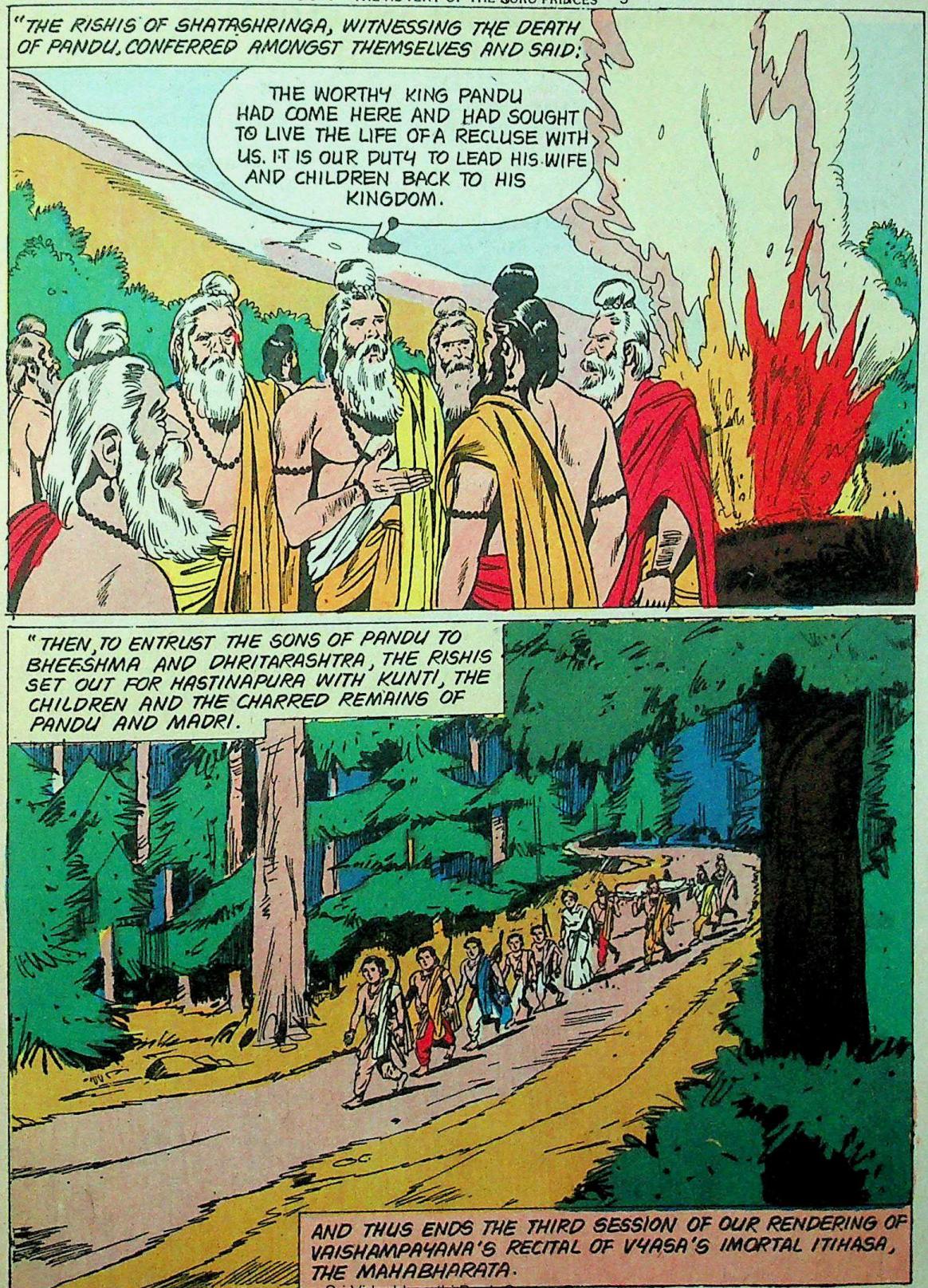

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PRONUNCIATION GUIDE AND GLOSSARY
MAHABHARATA – 3

Pg

1. **PANDAVA : पांण्डवा :**
Sons of PANDU.
KAURAVA : कौरवा :
Descendants of KURU. Here the sons of DHRITARASHTRA.
VEDA VYASA: वेदव्यास :
Literally the man who analysed and compiled the VEDAS — RIG, YAJUR, SAMA and ATHARVA.
BHARATA : भारता :
Descendants of king BHARATA, the son of DUSHYANTA and SHAKUNTALA.
VAISHAMPAYANA:वैशम्पायन:
JANAMEJAYA : जनमेजय :
SARPA SATRA: सर्पसत्र
BHEESHMA : भीष्म :
Son of SHANTANU and GANGA. He was named DEVA-VRATA but came to be known as BHEESHMA for the terrible vow of renunciation he took at the age of twenty to enable SHANTANU to marry SATYAVATI.
KURU: कुरु :
A descendant of BHARATA. He sanctified the land known as KURUKSHETRA where much later the battle of the MAHABHARATA was fought and where the GITA was preached.
PANDU: पाण्डु :
Son of VEDA VYASA and AMBALIKA.
SATYAVATI: सत्यवती :
Daughter of VASU UPARICHARA, reared by a fisherman chief; mother of VEDA VYASA by Sage PARASHARA; mother of CHITRANGADA and VICHITRAVEERYA by SHANTANU.
AMBIKA: अम्बिका :
Second daughter of the king of KASHI, widow of VICHITRA-VEERYA and mother of DHRITARASHTRA by VEDA VYASA.
AMBALIKA: अम्बालिका :
Third daughter of the king of KASHI, widow of VICHITRA-VEERYA and mother of PANDU by VEDA VYASA.
VIDURA: विदुर :
Son of VEDA VYASA and AMBALIKA'S shoodra maid.
KUNTI: कुन्ती :
Daughter of SHOORA, reared by KUNTIBHOJA and the wife of PANDU.

2. **MADRI: माद्री :**
Princess of the MADRA kingdom and second wife of PANDU.
SAL: साल :
Shorea robusta is the botanical name.
HIMALAYA: हिमालय :
DEVA: देवा :
Denizen of the celestial world characterized by godliness as opposed to ASURAs who were characterized by baser passions.

4. **HASTINAPURA: हस्तिनापुरं :**
Capital of the KURUs, on the banks of the GANGA
VANAPRASTHA ASHRAMA: वानप्रस्थाश्रम :
The third of the four stages of human life as laid down in Hindu thought; the stage of retirement and introspection. The first stage enjoins disciplined quest of knowledge; the second, fulfilment as a householder and the last, renunciation.

5. **BRAHMANA: ब्राह्मणा :**
Class of people traditionally engaged in learning and scholastics.
DHRITARASHTRA: धृतराष्ट्र :
Son of VEDA VYASA and AMBIKA. Born blind because AMBIKA shut out her vision when approached by VEDA VYASA.

6. **GANDHARI: गान्धारी :**
Wife of DHRITARASHTRA, daughter of SUBALA king of GANDHARA. When she knew she was to marry a blind man she blindfolded herself out of devotion and regard for her future husband.

6. **YUDHISHTHIRA: युधिष्ठिर :**
7. **SUBALA: सुबल :**
King of GANDHARA.
9. **DURYODHANA: दुर्योधन :**
11. **YUYUTSU : युयुत्सु :**
DUHSHALA: दुःशला :
12. **CHAITRARATHA : चैत्ररथं :**
GANDHAMADANA: गन्धमादनं :
INDRADYUMNA : इन्द्रद्युम्नं :
SHATASHRINGA : शतश्रृंगं :
13. **MANU: मनु :**
Ancestor of the human race.
BRAHMA: ब्रह्म :
The Creator. First of the divine triumvirate.
14. **SHWETAKETU: श्वेतकेतु :**
An ancient sage who prescribed chastity for married women because he was provoked when his mother was led away by a brahmana, in the presence of his unprotesting father.
UDDALAKA: उद्दालक :
Father of Shwetaketu.
RISHI: ऋषि :
A Sage.
15. **KRISHNA DWAIPAYANA: कृष्णद्वैपायन :**
Original name of VEDA VYASA. KRISHNA because he was dark, DWAIPAYANA because he was born on an island.
DURVASA: दुर्वासस् :
A sage known for being hard to please, who Kunti succeeeded in pleasing and for which she received the MANTRA.
MANTRA: मंत्र :
A mystical chant.
DHARMA: धर्म :
16. **KSHATRIYA : क्षत्रिया :**
Class of people traditionally engaged in the military arts.
VAYU: वायु :
BHEEMA भीम :
18. **INDRA : इन्द्र :**
King of the DEVAs.
19. **ARJUNA: अर्जुन :**
20. **KHANDAVA: खाण्डव:**
AGNI: अग्नि :
Fire-god.
VISHNU: विष्णु :
The Preserver. Second of the divine triumvirate.
SHIVA : शिव :
The Destroyer. Third of the divine triumvirate.
PARASHURAMA: परशुराम :
Sixth incarnation of Vishnu; son of sage JAMADAGNI famous for his valour and knowledge of esoteric weapons.
PASHUPATA: पाशुपतं :
Divine missile of Shiva in his aspect as PASHUPATI lord of all fauna.
NIVATAKAVACHA : निवातकवचा :
An Asura tribe; reputedly invincible because of their skill in magical weapons;
22. **SHASTRA: शास्त्र :**
Sacred lore.
NAKULA: नकुल :
SAHADEVA: सहदेव :
23. **SHALYA : शल्य :**
24. **ASHWIN : अश्विनौ :**
The presiding deities (twins) of medicine.

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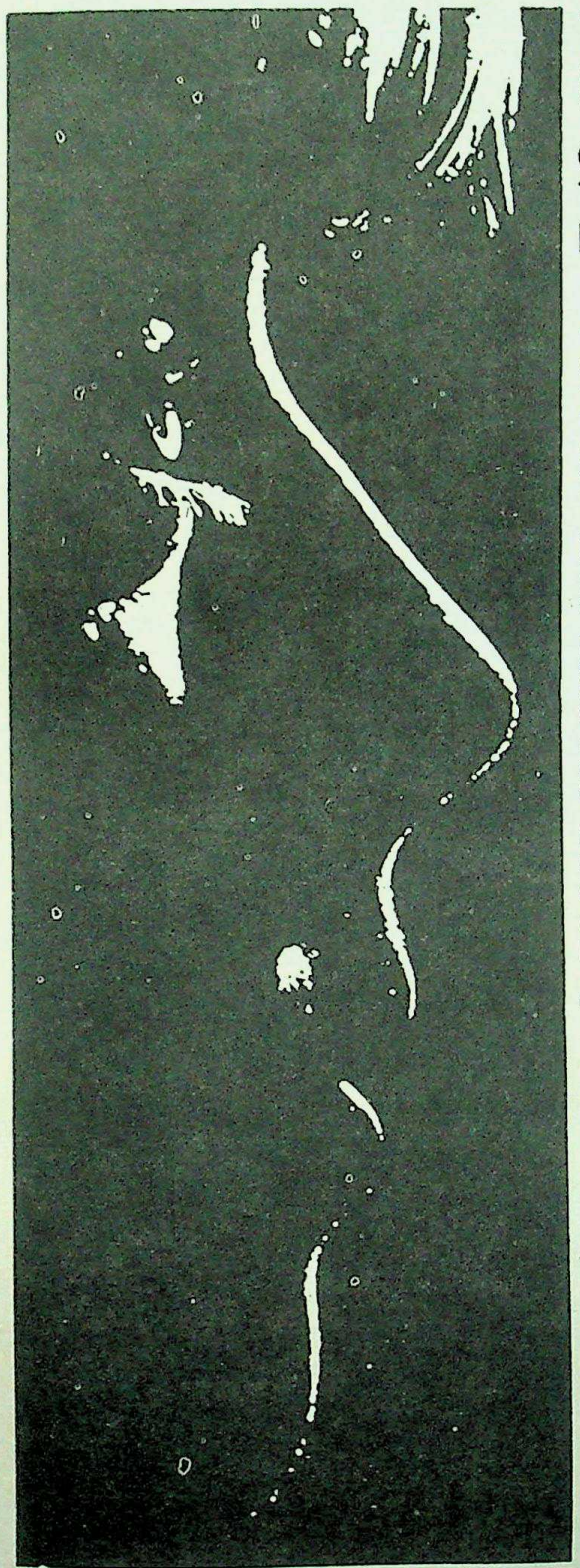

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